HEIDI

JOHANNA SPYRI

Dena WILNER

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HEIDI

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI

(Author of "Cornelli" & "Gritli's Children.")

Translated by

SHIRLEY WATKINS

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers

NEW YORK

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Printed in the U. S. A.

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HEIDI

CHAPTER ONE

UP TO THE ALM-UNCLE

FROM the pleasant old town of Mayenfeld, a path leads through green meadows all dappled with the shade of spreading trees, to the base of the mountains which gaze down from majestic heights upon the little valley.

Then the footpath takes a sharper ascent, and the wayfarer finds himself treading the short, coarse furze of the heath, while the pungent scent of mountain herbs begins to steal up from the earth; for now begins the long rise, steep and unswerving, into the Alps.

On a sunny morning in June, a young woman, whose sturdy figure, and bold, open glance proclaimed her a true daughter of the mountain country, was climbing this arduous path, leading a little girl by the hand. The child's round cheeks were in such a glow of heat, that even through the deep brown of her sunburnt skin, the color flushed in them as red as fire. Nor, indeed was it any wonder, for in spite of the burning June sun, the poor little thing was bundled and swaddled in clothes as if to ward off the sharpest frost. She might have been five years of age perhaps, but no human being would have hazarded a guess as to her natural appearance, since her small person was rendered com-

pletely shapeless by its voluminous wrappings. Two dresses—one might have suspected even a third—had been put on her, one on top of the other, and, as if this were not enough, a thick red cotton shawl had been wound around her, and tied securely behind. Thus clad, and shod with heavy, clouted shoes, the odd little figure trudged sturdily up the mountain path.

After about an hour's climbing they reached a hamlet lying midway between the valley and the Alm. It was the older girl's native village, but although she was greeted amiably from the doorways as she passed, she did not pause until she came to the more scattered cottages lying on the outskirts of the hamlet. Then, from the doorway of one of these dwellings a voice called, "Wait a moment, Dete! If you are going farther, I'll go with you."

At this she stopped, and immediately the little one withdrew her hand, and solemnly seated herself on the ground.

"Are you tired, Heidi?"

"No—I'm hot," responded the little girl, simply.

"Never mind," said Dete, encouragingly. "Only put your best foot foremost, and we'll be there in an hour."

At this point, a stout, cheery looking woman approached them from the cottage, and Heidi, rising clumsily from her resting place, slipped off behind the two old acquaintances, who immediately launched into lively gossip concerning the various good folk of Dorfli, and its environs.

"But where are you going with the child, Dete?" in-

quired the newcomer. "She's your sister's little girl—the orphan—isn't she?"

"Yes," Dete replied, briefly. "I'm taking her up to the Alm-Uncle. She's going to live there."

"What!" cried the other, in amazement, "live with the Alm-Uncle! You're crazy, Dete! How can you! Well—the old man will only send you back a good deal faster than you came, and that's all you'll get for your pains!"

"Oh, no he won't!" returned Dete, with a determined wag of her head. "After all he's her grandfather, and he must do something for her. I've taken care of her up till now, but I can't give up a good position for the sake of the child. Let him shoulder *his* responsibilities, Barbel,—that's what *I* say!"

"That's all very nice and fine—if he were like other folk," retorted the sturdy Barbel, with a touch of sharpness. "But you know him as well as I do. Besides how should he know how to care for so young a child, even if he were minded to? Why, he wouldn't know where to begin! Ah, well ——" Barbel dismissed the delicate subject with a shrug of her plump shoulders. "And where will you be going yourself, afterwards?"

"To Frankfort. I've an uncommonly good position in view there," Dete explained. "Last summer, you see, there was a lady and gentleman at the Baths, staying at the hotel where I worked. I kept their rooms in order, and I pleased them so well that they wanted to take me home with them. But I couldn't go at that time. Now, as they are at the same place, and still

want to take me into regular service, you can depend on it I'm not going to let the chance slip by me again in a hurry!"

"Well, I wouldn't be in that child's shoes for a good deal!" burst out Barbel. "Why, no one knows anything about that old man up there! He hasn't a word to say to a living soul! He never sets foot in church, year in and year out, and when he comes down here, once in a twelvemonth, maybe,—with that big staff of his—everyone gets out of his way in a fright. With those bushy, grey eyebrows, and that tangled beard he looks like a forest on two legs, or an old Indian. Lucky if one doesn't meet him alone, *I* say!"

"All the same, he's her grandfather," said Dete, stubbornly, "and it's his business to take care of the child now. If he won't do his duty by her it's he who must answer for it—not I!"

Barbel was silent for a moment or two. Her indignation had begun to yield to the natural inquisitiveness of the villager. There were many matters concerning the old man in question that had long teased Dame Barbel's lively curiosity. Why was it, for instance, that he showed such a fierce aversion toward his fellow-men? Why was it that people avoided *him*, and always spoke of him uneasily, and with bated breath, as if they were in constant fear of him? Nor did Barbel know why he was called the "Alm-Uncle" by all the people of Dorfli. Certainly he could not really be the uncle of all its inhabitants; though Barbel called him "uncle" like everyone else, and even used the more familiar dialect

word, "Ohi," when she spoke of him. She had lived in Dorfli only since her marriage a short time before, being a native of Prattigau, and was, therefore, not wholly intimate with the current gossip concerning the interesting personalities of Dorfli. On the other hand Dete, who was Barbel's bosom friend, had been born in Dorfli, and had lived there with her mother until the latter's death the year before. Since then she had been employed as chambermaid in a hotel at Ragaz, a fashionable watering place not far from Dorfli.

Barbel therefore considered that here at last was an opportunity to gratify her curiosity that must not escape her, so, in a confidential tone she began:

"What I'd like to know is, what's weighing on the old man's conscience that gives him such a look in the eyes, and keeps him up there like a hermit, with never a glimpse of a human soul. There are plenty of tales about him—I dare say you've heard some of them from your sister—eh?"

"To be sure—but I don't tattle them," returned Dete. "If he'd catch wind of idle talk coming from me, I'd fare sweetly with him, indeed!"

Barbel was not in the least disconcerted by this reply.

"But *you* know the truth of the matter," she coaxed. "The rest is only gossip. Come—tell me. Is the old man really such a terror as people say?"

"Whether it was always so with him, I don't know," Dete answered, not to be taken off her guard. "I'm only six-and-twenty, while he'll never see seventy again. It's not to be expected that *I* should know what he was like

when he was young. It's true that my mother came from Domleschg, which was his native town too, and I don't deny that I could tell you a thing or two about him, if I could be sure that it wouldn't be prattled all over Prattigau."

"Bah, Dete! What do you mean?" said Barbel, in an offended tone. "Gossip doesn't spread as easily as that in Prattigau, and I dare say I know how to hold my tongue when there's a necessity for it. Come now—have no fear—tell me."

"Well, well then—but mind you *do* keep it secret," said the cautious Dete, giving in at last, and at this point she glanced around to make sure that the little girl was not within ear-shot. But the child was nowhere to be seen. Dete stood open-mouthed in amazement. The child must have wandered away from the two women some time before, when in the absorption of their conversation they had quite forgotten her existence. Certainly there was not a sign of her anywhere although the path was so straight and clear that one could see the whole way to Dorfli.

"Ah, now I see her!" exclaimed Barbel. "There——" She pointed far up the mountain. "She's with Peter, the goatherd, and his goats. I wonder what made him so late to-day in taking them to pasture. But never mind—he'll take care of the child for you, and you can tell me what you were going to say without bothering about her."

"He won't have to trouble himself much to take care of her," remarked Dete. "She's not a stupid one for her

five years, I can tell you. She keeps her eyes open, and sees what's going on, as I know well enough. A good thing, too—she'll need her wits, for the old man hasn't a thing in the world but his two goats and his cottage."

"But there was a time when he was a deal better off than now, eh?" prompted Barbel.

"He? I should say he was!" exclaimed Dete. "Why, he once owned the biggest and finest farm in Domleschg. He was the elder son, you see, and he had only one brother. This brother was always very quiet, and well-behaved and diligent, while the older would do nothing. What *he* liked was to play the gentleman—riding around the country and taking up with idle ne'er-do-wells such as respectable folk would have nothing to do with. Well, then, what with drinking and gambling, it was not long before he had frittered away his land and his money. His father and mother died of grief, they say, and his brother, whom he'd brought to beggary, went away, no one knows where, to hide himself for bitterness and shame. As for Uncle—he had nothing in the world but his own evil name—he, too, disappeared, and what became of him no one knew for certain. At first it was said that he'd joined the soldiery at Naples, but after that, for twelve or fifteen years, there was never a word of him.

"Then, once more he appeared in Domleschg, with a half-grown boy, whom he tried to get his relatives to provide for; but every door was shut in his face. That made him furious and bitter, and he vowed never again to set foot in Domleschg. So he came here to Dorfli

and here he lived with the boy, Tobias. His wife, I suppose, had died soon after his marriage. He must have had a little money, for he apprenticed Tobias to a carpenter to learn the trade. Tobias was a proper lad enough, and was well thought of by everyone. But the old man was suspicious and unfriendly; people said, too, that he had deserted from the army, and that matters would have gone hard with him there if he hadn't, because—so it was rumored—he had killed a man. Not in battle, you understand, but in a brawl.

"My family, however, acknowledged their relationship to him—my mother's grandmother and his grandmother had been first cousins, you see. So we always called him Uncle. Then, as you know, we were related one way or another to nearly all the people in Dorfli, so after a while everyone else began to call him Uncle, too. Then, when he had gone away, and perched himself up there all alone on the Alm, they took to calling him the Alm-Uncle."

"And what became of the boy, Tobias?" asked Barbel, profoundly interested.

"I'm coming to him. I can't tell everything at once," said Dete. "Tobias, as I said, was apprenticed to a carpenter at Mels, and as soon as he had learned the trade he came back here to Dorfli and married my sister, Adelheid. They'd been sweethearts for years, and after they were married, they were as happy as could be. But it didn't last long, poor souls. Only two years later, Tobias was working on a house that was being built, and a beam fell on him and killed him outright.

When they brought him home, all crushed and disfigured, Adelheid fell ill of grief and horror. She had never been strong, and had often suffered from queer spells when one couldn't tell whether she was asleep or awake. She couldn't recover from the shock of her husband's death, and just two weeks after Tobias was killed, they buried poor Adelheid too.

"Then you know people began to talk about the awful misfortune, and said openly as well as secretly that it was a judgment on the old man for his sinful life. The Pastor himself tried to make him repent of all the evil he had done, but he only got more stubborn, and was so fierce and surly that everyone took good care to keep out of his way. At last he went up to the Alm, and never came down to Dorfli—and there he has lived ever since, with his heart shut against God and man.

"Mother and I took Adelheid's baby, who was only a year old, to live with us. Then, in the summer, mother died, and as I wanted to get a position at the Baths, I put the child to board with a family in Pfaffersdorf. I could always get plenty of work at the Baths, even in winter, for I'm a good needlewoman, and can do neat mending, and embroidery. But early in the spring the lady and gentleman I spoke of came from Frankfort, and again offered me a position with them. It's too good a one to lose, I can tell you, so the day after tomorrow I'm going away with them."

"And leave the child with the Alm-Uncle!" exclaimed Barbel, reproachfully. "How can you have the heart, Dete?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Dete, sharply. "I'm sure I've done my duty by her fairly enough. What more can I do? I certainly can't take a five-year-old child to Frankfort with me." Then changing the subject abruptly she asked, "Where are you going now, Barbel?—we're half-way up to the Alm."

"I stop here. I want to speak to Peter's mother, who does my spinning for me in the winter. So—good luck to you, Dete."

Dete shook hands with her friend, but instead of continuing her climb, remained standing on the same spot, while the other approached a tiny, weather-beaten hut, a little distance off, which was partially sheltered from the rough mountain winds by the hollow in which it was built. Indeed it needed all the natural protection it could get, for so tottering and dilapidated was it, that when a storm was rising in the mountains, and the wind swept mercilessly down the slopes, everything about the cottage rattled and quaked—windows and doors and worm-eaten beams—as if in another moment the whole flimsy structure would be carried away.

Here dwelt Peter, the Goatherd, a lad of eleven years who, every morning, went down to Dorfli to fetch the goats, and then drove them far up on the mountain where they could munch the short grass and herbs until sundown. When dusk began to fall then down again ran Peter, with his light-footed little herd, and, reaching the hamlet, blew a shrill whistle on his fingers to notify the owners to come to the village green and get their goats for the night. Often the little boys and

girls came too, to pet the friendly animals, and it was only on these occasions that Peter had a chance to see and talk to children of his own age. All the rest of his time was spent with his goats. It is true that at home he lived with his mother and his grandmother, but he saw them very little. Every morning he had to be off at daybreak, and he rarely came back from Dorfli until late in the evening, since he lingered there as long as possible to talk to the other children. Then, at home, he had only time enough to gulp down his bread and milk before he crept to bed and fell fast asleep. A year before his father had been killed by a falling tree; he, too, had been called Peter the Goatherd, for he had followed the same occupation, and so it was that Peter's mother, whose real name was Brigitta, was always known as Goatherd Peter's wife. As for the blind old grandmother, she was just "Grandmother" to everyone far and wide.

Dete had waited fully ten minutes to see whether the children were coming up behind her with the goats; but as they were nowhere in sight she climbed a little higher so that she could get a view of the whole Alm, and peered this way and that with increasing impatience.

Meanwhile, the boy and girl had turned off upon another path; young Peter knew all the places where the pasturage was sweetest for his little goats, and stopped here and there for them to nibble the tenderest grass. At first, the little girl was sadly hindered by her heavy clothing, and was panting from weariness. But she did not utter a word of complaint; she only looked

wistfully at Peter, who, with his bare feet and scanty clothing, clambered over the stones and undergrowth as nimbly as his own goats. All of a sudden, Heidi seated herself on the ground, and in a twinkling had pulled off her own shoes and stockings; next she proceeded to untie the thick shawl that swaddled her, then slipped off her little dress. There was still the other dress to unhook, for her aunt had put on her best frock over her everyday dress in order to save time and the inconvenience of a bundle. But in a moment Heidi was out of it, and was standing there clad only in her little shirt, and her light petticoat, and stretching her bare, chubby arms delightedly in the air. When she had laid her clothes in a neat heap, she sprang after Peter and the goats as light-footed as any of them.

Peter had not paid attention to what she was doing when she had dropped behind, but now as she caught up to him in her new attire a broad grin broke over his face. He glanced back, and seeing the little heap of clothing, grinned still more widely until his mouth fairly stretched from ear to ear. But he said nothing.

Feeling considerably more at ease in her scanty costume, Heidi now began to chatter vivaciously to her companion, and kept him pretty busy answering the endless questions that she fired at him. How many goats did he have? Where was he going with them? What would he do with them after he got there? And a hundred others, until at length they too reached the hut on the summit of the hill where Dete was waiting.

Dete had hardly taken one glance at the little party when she cried out in horror:

"Heidi! What have you done with yourself! Where have you left your dresses and your shawl? What have you done with those stockings that I just made you, and the brand new shoes I just bought for you? Where have you left them, I say?"

The child pointed serenely down the mountain slope, and replied briefly:

"There."

Dete followed the little finger, and in the distance made out an indefinite object on the top of which lay a dot of red which might have been the shawl.

"Heidi, you bad girl," she broke out again, angrily. "What ever possessed you to do such a thing?"

"I didn't need them," said Heidi, simply, showing no signs of contrition for her deed.

"Stupid, troublesome child!" scolded the exasperated Dete. "Have you lost your senses! Who's going to go down the mountain again, I'd like to know? Here—Peter! Why do you stand like a ninny as if you were glued to the ground? Run down, quickly, and get those clothes!"

"I'm late already," replied Peter, stolidly, making no move from the spot where, with his hands in his pockets, he had been listening to Dete's outburst.

"What a boy you are!" cried Dete, in a rage. "I suppose you expect me to give you something, eh? Well, look here then," and she held up a shining new coin. Peter threw one glance at it, and then was off

like a flash. Down the steepest and rockiest grade he clambered, as nimble and sure of foot as a young antelope, and with the bundle of clothes was back again so swiftly that, in spite of herself, Dete had to praise him for his speed, and promptly gave him the coin that he had earned. Master Peter's whole face beamed with delight as he pocketed the money, for it was not often that the little goatherd had such a treasure to call his own.

"You're going our way," Dete said to him, as the party started on again. "You can carry those things up to the Alm-Uncle's for me."

Peter complied good-naturedly with the order, and followed her obediently enough swinging the bundle in one hand and flourishing his switch with the other, while Heidi and the goats brought up the rear of the procession, leaping and prancing ecstatically over the rough ground.

Three-quarters of an hour more of energetic climbing and the Alm was reached at last, where, on an overhanging ledge of the mountain, stood the hut of the Alm-Uncle, exposed to every blast from the four winds of heaven, but bathed in the full sunlight, too, and with a free view over the whole valley far below it.

Behind the rude cottage stood three ancient pine-trees, which seemed to stretch out their long thick branches proudly, as if boasting that they had never known the humiliation of the woodsman's axe. Further back, the mountain heights lifted themselves toward the sky, their rich and fertile slopes becoming gradually

more steep and barren, until they merged into stark, grey cliffs.

The Alm-Uncle had built himself a bench against the side of the hut which overlooked the valley, and here, with his pipe in his mouth, and his hands on his knees, sat the old man himself, quietly watching the party that was making its way up to his eyrie. In the course of the ascent their positions had changed, and now the children and the goats were ahead, while Dete clambered behind them.

Heidi was the first to reach the Alm, and going at once to the old man, she laid her little hand in his and said:

"Good-day, Grandfather."

"Eh? What's this?" said the old man, roughly. But, after a moment, he shook hands with the child, while from beneath his dense grey eyebrows his small, keen eyes regarded her penetratingly. Heidi returned the sharp gaze steadily. Her grandfather, whose shaggy brows met like a thicket on his scowling forehead, seemed to her an object worthy of thoughtful consideration. But now Dete boldly approached the Alm-Uncle, while Peter came to a stolid halt, and prepared to take in everything that was about to happen.

"I bid you good-day, Uncle," said Dete, briskly. "I've brought you the child of Tobias and Adelheid. I don't suppose you recognize her—you haven't seen her since she was a year old."

"So?" returned the old man, slowly. "Well, what does she want of me?" Then, without warning, he

turned sharply upon Peter. "As for you—be off with you—you, and your goats. And see that you take mine along too. You aren't any too early!"

The frightened Peter disappeared without a word; for the Alm-Uncle's fierce look was not one that encouraged excuses.

"The child must stay with you," said Dete, answering his question. "I've done my duty by her for four years, and you can do yours now."

"Humph!" growled the Alm-Uncle; and again his eyes flashed dangerously at the young woman. "Well—and if she starts to whine and whimper for you—such young children do—what must *I* do then?"

"That's your affair," returned Dete, with a shrug. "I know well enough that no one concerned himself with how *I* was to manage for her when she was left on *my* hands—a year-old baby, and me having plenty enough to do with myself and my mother. I've taken a position now, and you're the next of kin to the child. If you can't take care of her, do what you want with her,—if harm comes to her you can answer for it, and I dare say you don't want any more burdens on your conscience!"

Dete had said more than she had intended. The truth was that her own conscience was not entirely easy, and she had lost her head a little. At her last words the old man sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing so fiercely that she stepped back involuntarily. Then he jerked out his arm, and pointed down the mountain.

"Go!" he commanded, hoarsely. "Go back where

you came from, and never show yourself to me again!"

The terrified Dete did not let him repeat his order.

"Good-bye, Heidi!" she stammered, and fled down the mountain, fright and fury carrying her down the rough slope as if she had wings.

This time, no cheery greetings met her on her way through her native Dorfli. The townsfolk knew Dete well enough and were perfectly aware of Heidi's history and of what arrangement had been made for her. Now they tormented her with meaning questions, as she hurried along the street.

"Where is the child? Dete, where have you left the child?" She answered defiantly, "Up with the Alm-Uncle. With the Alm-Uncle, do you hear?" But in spite of herself, she winced. Her mother, on her death-bed, had entrusted the child to her care. And from all sides, the women-folk reproached her: "How could you do it, Dete!" "The poor little one!" "To leave such a little, helpless creature up with the Alm-Uncle!"

She ran on as quickly as she could, soothing her conscience with the thought that after all she could help the child in the future when she would have more money. And at length, telling herself that soon she would be out of sight and hearing of everyone who could vex her with questions and reproaches, and that at last she was free to enter upon her fine new position, she pursued her way with a heart as light as ever.

CHAPTER TWO

WITH THE GRANDFATHER

WHEN Dete had gone, the old man resumed his seat on the bench, and now, with his eyes fixed on the ground, sat there in total silence, blowing out great clouds of smoke from his pipe.

Heidi, meanwhile, in a perfectly cheerful state of mind, began a tour of inspection of her new surroundings. First she had discovered the stall for the goats, which had been built so that it joined the cottage itself; but finding it empty, she went around to the back of the hut. The wind was soughing through the branches of the pine-trees, and the child stood beneath them, listening to the fitful, eerie music of it until it died down; then she wandered back again to where her grandfather was sitting. He had not moved. After a moment, Heidi went up to him, laid her hand lightly on his shoulder, and regarded him in grave silence. The old man glanced up.

"What now?" he demanded, as she stood there, motionless in front of him.

"I want to see the inside of the hut, Grandfather."

"Come along, then," and he rose to lead the way. "But take your bundle, too."

"I don't need it any more," said Heidi calmly.

The old man turned and looked at her sharply. Heidi stood there, her black eyes sparkling with antici-

pation of the novel sights that she was about to find inside her new home.

"She can't be daft, surely," he muttered to himself; then aloud, he asked in a brusque tone, "Why won't you need it, eh?"

"I'd rather be like the goats. They don't have a lot of clothes to bother them," replied Heidi, simply.

"Well, well—as you please. But take your things along, at any rate. We'll put them away in the cupboard."

Heidi obeyed him; then he opened the door of the hut. From the threshold, she saw before her a fairly large room, which constituted the whole interior of the hut, scantily furnished, with a table and chair in the middle, a sleeping bunk in one corner, and in another the hearth, with a great kettle hanging over it. The old man crossed the room, and pulling open a door, which was cut into the wall, showed her a capacious closet. Here, it would seem, were stored all of the Alm-Uncle's household goods and chattels; his coats hung on a nail behind the door; on one shelf lay a couple of shirts, several pairs of socks, and one or two shawls; on a second, were arranged a few plates and cups, and on the topmost were bread and cheese and smoked meats.

The moment he opened the cupboard, Heidi darted inside, and began to tuck away her bundle as far behind her grandfather's clothes as possible, so that it could not be brought forth too easily. Then she came forth, and stood looking about her attentively.

"Where shall I sleep, Grandfather?" she asked, after a moment or two.

"Where you please."

Evidently Heidi found this answer perfectly satisfactory, and immediately began to poke into every nook and corner to find out in what place it would be most pleasant to make her bed. Presently, on the other side of the room, beside her grandfather's bunk, she spied a small ladder, leading up to a hay-loft above, and at once she ran to it, and began to clamber up with the agility of a little monkey. Then, from the top of the ladder, she gave a shout of delight. The floor of the loft was thickly strewn with fresh, sweet-smelling hay, and from a little window one could look down upon the whole valley.

"I'll sleep here, Grandfather!" cried Heidi. "Oh, this is *lovely!* Just come and see how nice it is!"

"I know," replied the old man gruffly, from below.

"Now I shall make my bed!" announced Heidi, trotting busily about the loft. "Only you must come up, Grandfather, and bring me a sheet. You always have to put a sheet on a bed before you lie down on it."

"Very well, then," said the Alm-Uncle; and after a moment he went to the cupboard, where he began to rummage, until beneath his shirts he found a long piece of coarsely woven cloth. It was the only thing he owned that might do service as a sheet, and up the ladder he climbed with it. Heidi had already contrived a very nice little bed indeed for herself, with a big pile of hay for a pillow so that her head should lie under

the round window, where the fresh mountain air could fan her face.

"That's very well done," said the Alm-Uncle approvingly. "And now we have the sheet too, you see. But wait a moment." He took up a generous armful of hay, and spread it so that the bed should be twice as soft as before. Then he helped her to spread the cloth, which was too thick and heavy for her to manage alone, and when Heidi had tucked it in trimly she stepped back to consider the result of their efforts.

"But we've forgotten one thing, Grandfather," she announced after a moment's thought.

"What now?"

"The cover. You have to have a cover. Then, when you go to bed, you creep in between it and the sheet, you see."

"And what if I haven't got such a thing?"

"Oh, then don't bother, Grandfather," said Heidi, politely. "I can use more hay for the cover." But as she started to gather up another armful from the stack, the old man drew her back gently.

"Wait," said he, and down the ladder he climbed again, and was back presently with a stout sack which he laid on the floor. "Perhaps that'll serve better than hay, eh?"

Heidi was delighted. "Now my bed is lovely!" she cried when her grandfather had helped her to spread the heavy sack neatly over the hay. "I wish it was night now so that I could lie down in it right away!"

"It seems to me that we might have something to

eat first," suggested the Alm-Uncle. "How do you feel about it?"

Heidi had been too intent upon making her bed to have thoughts for anything else, but now she found that she was very hungry indeed. It was no wonder, for she had eaten nothing since morning, and then her breakfast had consisted only of a bit of bread and a cup of weak coffee, on which light sustenance she had made a long and wearisome journey. So, to the old man's question she answered heartily that his idea seemed to her a very good one.

"Agreed, then," said the Alm-Uncle. "Let's go down."

When they reached the room below, he went to the hearth, pushed aside the big kettle, and hooked a smaller one onto the chain which hung over the fire; then drawing up the wooden stool, he took a big slice of cheese, fixed it on the prongs of a long iron fork, and turned it over the fire until it was all toasted a tempting golden brown. For a time, Heidi stood watching him with rapt attention; then, suddenly, she darted away to the cupboard, and began to bustle about industriously. And, when at length the old man took the pot off the fire, and brought it and the toasted cheese over to the table, he found that two places had been neatly laid there, with knives and plates, and a big loaf of bread in the middle. His little granddaughter had seen just where everything was kept in the cupboard, and knew exactly what was needed for a meal.

"I see that you know how to think some matters out

for yourself," was the Alm-Uncle's comment, as he set down the cheese, using the loaf of bread for a platter. "But you've forgotten one thing."

Heidi, who had been sniffing the savory steam that issued from the kettle, looked up at him inquiringly. Then, after a moment's thought, she ran back to the cupboard. There was only one bowl on the shelves, but at the back she found two glasses. In a second she had brought down a bowl and a glass and set them on the table.

"Good. You know how to help yourself," said the Alm-Uncle, approvingly. "But where are you going to sit?" He himself occupied the only chair. Heidi promptly ran to the hearth and brought over the three-legged stool.

"So. Now you have a seat," said her grandfather. "But it's a good deal too low for you; you're too small to reach up to the table even from my chair. We'll see what we can do." So saying he rose, filled the little bowl with milk, set it on his own chair, and drew it up to the stool so that Heidi had a little chair and table all to herself. Then he cut a generous slice of bread and a piece of the mellow cheese, and put them before her.

"There you are. Now eat away," said he; and he sat down on a corner of the table and began his own meal. As for Heidi, she was so thirsty after her long and dusty journey, that, taking a firm hold of her bowl of milk, she drank and drank without stopping until there was not a drop left.

"How does the milk suit you?" asked the Alm-Uncle, as the little girl drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"I've never tasted any milk so good," declared Heidi.

"Then you shall have some more," and once again the Alm-Uncle filled her bowl full to the brim. Heidi ate and drank contentedly, spreading her bread with the rich cheese, which was as soft as butter, and tasted better than anything one can imagine, and washing down each bite with a hearty drink of milk.

When, at last, the meal was over, the Alm-Uncle went out to put the goat stall in order for the night, and Heidi followed him about, watching attentively how he swept it, and then strewed it all with fresh straw for his little goats to sleep on. As soon as everything here was clean and neat, he went off to his workshop and began upon a new and very interesting piece of work. First he cut some straight sticks; then he fashioned a smooth, round board, boring holes in it into which he fixed the sticks.

"Well, now, what do you think this is, Heidi?" he asked presently.

"That's my chair!" cried Heidi, who was round-eyed with wonder. "It's just like yours only it's higher! How quickly you made it, Grandfather!"

"She knows how to use her eyes—the young one," the Alm-Uncle muttered to himself. Then he picked up his hammer, and went off to mend various things about the hut, driving a nail here, and fastening a lock there, while Heidi trotted at his heels, finding everything that he did wonderful and interesting.

Thus the afternoon passed, and evening began to draw in. Through the thick boughs of the pine-trees the wind now rushed with increasing vigor, its wild music filling Heidi's ears, and swelling in her heart. Under the tossing branches of the ancient trees she danced and leapt with the rhythm of the wind as if possessed by some ineffable joy, while the Alm-Uncle, leaning in the doorway of the hut, watched her silently.

All at once, through the dusk came a shrill whistle. Heidi stopped short in the middle of her dance, and the Alm-Uncle stepped out to meet young Peter, who, in the midst of his flock, was leaping toward them down the mountain. With a cry of delight, Heidi darted forward to greet each and every one of her old friends of the morning's journey.

The Alm-Uncle now stretched out both hands, in each of which he held a little salt, and presently out of the flock, which was standing still before the doorway of the hut, stepped two slender little goats, one white, the other brown, who began to lick his fingers eagerly.

When Peter had driven off the rest of the herd toward Dorfli, Heidi stood stroking and caressing the two little animals that had remained, in an ecstasy of delight.

"Are they ours, Grandfather? Are both of them ours? Are you going to put them in the stall? Shall they always stay with us?" she cried, one question following the other so rapidly that the Alm-Uncle could barely get in a "Yes" between them. When the goats had licked all the salt off his hands, he told Heidi to

go and get the bowl and some bread; then he sat down and began to milk the white goat.

"Here is your supper now," he said when he had filled the bowl, and given Heidi a slice of bread. "Eat it, and then run off to your little bed, and go to sleep. Your Aunt Dete left a bundle for you that I put away in the cupboard. If you need anything you can find it there. Now, I must go and put the goats into the stall, so good-night and sleep sweetly."

"Good-night! Good-night—what do you call the goats, Grandfather?" cried Heidi, running after him.

"The white one is named Little Swan, and the brown one, Little Bear," replied the Alm-Uncle.

"Then good-night, Little Swan! Good-night, Little Bear!" cried Heidi, and she gave each of the pretty little creatures one more hug before they trotted away after her grandfather. Then she sat down on the bench to eat her bread and milk.

The wind had now grown so strong that it seemed as if it were going to blow her away, so she finished her supper hastily, and ran indoors to bed. And in a little while, curled up in the thick, fragrant hay, she was sleeping as sweetly as if she lay in a palace.

Presently, the Alm-Uncle, too, came in to go to bed, for every morning he was up before the sun, which in summer-time rose early over the mountains.

The wind began to blow harder and harder, until the whole cottage shook and creaked. It moaned in the chimney, and rushed so violently through the pine-trees

that now and then a bough broke under its fierce strength.

In the middle of the night the Alm-Uncle awoke.

"Perhaps the child is frightened," he said half aloud, and he rose from his bunk and climbed up the ladder to the hay-loft to see whether the little girl were sleeping or no. A bright moon was shining through the round window, but a moment later was hidden by the ragged, scudding clouds; then again it shone out bright and clear, and by its light the Alm-Uncle saw that Heidi was sleeping peacefully, under the rude sack, her flushed cheek pillowed on one chubby little arm. And it must have been that her dreams were happy ones, for she was smiling in her sleep.

The Alm-Uncle stood looking down at the dreaming child until the moon once more disappeared behind the flying clouds. Then he turned, and stole back softly to his bed.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE PASTURES

THE early morning sun, sending a long bright beam through the round window of the hay-loft, awakened Heidi early, and for several moments the little girl sat blinking in bewilderment at her new surroundings, not at all clear yet as to where she was or how she had got there. But the deep rumble of her grandfather's voice below presently recalled all the extraordinary events of the past day. She was no longer lodged with poor old Ursula, who passed all her dreary life huddled over the kitchen fire, trying to drive the incurable chill of old age out of her cramped bones. She was high up on the Alm, with the sun and wind, and the majestic spaces of mountain and valley all about her. Filled with a joyous sense of freedom, she sprang up from her soft bed of hay, dressed herself quickly in her little shirt and petticoat, and clambered down the ladder, eager to see what this new day on the Alm was to bring forth.

The young goatherd, Peter, was already standing at the door of the hut in the midst of his flock, and Heidi having bidden him a lively good-morning, had next to bestow her affectionate attention on each of the goats in turn.

"How would you like to go up to the pastures with this party, eh?" asked the Alm-Uncle, appearing at that moment from the shed with Little Swan and Little Bear. Heidi's answer was a prance of joy.

"All right; but if you don't want the sun to laugh at you, ma'am, you must give that face of yours a good scrubbing. Everything is ready over there."

A big tub of water was standing near the door, and Heidi ran to it obediently, and scrubbed and rubbed until her ruddy cheeks fairly shone. The Alm-Uncle, meanwhile, had gone back into the hut, and now shouted to Peter:

"Here, Goat-general! Bring me your haversack!"

Peter obeyed. His round face wore a look of mild wonder at the summons, which changed to one of slow amazement as the old man thrust into his bag a great slice of cheese nearly three times as large as the piece Peter had brought for his own meal.

"Here is a cup, too," said the Alm-Uncle. "Heidi cannot drink the way you and the goats drink, so at noonday you must fill the cup with milk for her. She is in your care, mind you, so see to it that she doesn't fall over the cliffs!"

"The sun can't laugh at me now, Grandfather—can it?" cried Heidi, running to the old man, and holding up her face for inspection. In her anxiety to appear favorably under the critical eye of the sun, she had rubbed herself with the coarse towel until her face and neck and arms glowed with the color of a ripe beet, and in spite of himself, a grim smile forced itself over the Alm-Uncle's harsh features.

"I dare say the sun will be polite," he answered. "But to-night, when you get home, you go into the tub altogether, like a fish. For when young folk choose to

run about barefoot like these goats, they get black feet, too. Now—off with you both!"

The little party set forth merrily, Heidi leaping on ahead in an ecstasy of delight. The wind had swept every wisp of cloud from the deep blue summer sky, and a genial sun warmed the mountain slopes, all carpeted with flowers. Never in her life had Heidi seen or dreamed of such flowers—swarms of ruddy primroses, fringed gentians, blue as the sky itself, and golden rock-roses, with their thorny petals,—all laughing and nodding and beckoning to her. She wanted them all, and forgetful of Peter and the goats, darted here and there like a butterfly, gathering them by handfuls, and filling her petticoat with them as fast as she could. She would have liked to have been able to take them all, all, home with her, and strew them about in the hay of her sleeping-loft so that it would be like the Alm itself. Peter, whose eyes and wits moved very slowly indeed, found it almost beyond his powers to keep watch on his lively companion, and mind his goats as well; and between whistling to his straying flock, and shouting to the vagrant Heidi, he had a troublesome time of it.

"Where *are* you, Heidi?" he shouted, almost desperate at last.

"Here," came the reply; but no Heidi was visible. At the moment she was entirely concealed behind a mound covered with fragrant flowers, where, stretched on the ground, she lay breathing in their spicy perfume with all her might.

"Come here!" roared Peter. "You heard what the Alm-Uncle said—you'll fall over the cliffs!"

"Where are the cliffs?" inquired Heidi, lifting her head, but not moving from the enchanted spot, where every breath of wind shook forth a gush of fragrance.

"Up there. Come on, I tell you—we've got a good way to go yet."

But Heidi still lingered.

"And," continued Peter, with unwonted artfulness, "way up on the highest cliff a great big eagle sits and screeches."

That helped. Heidi immediately jumped up and ran to him, holding out her petticoat, which was full of flowers.

"You ought to have enough to please you now," remarked Peter as they went on their way. "If you go on picking them there won't be any left to-morrow."

This idea impressed Heidi, and as, moreover, her petticoat would hardly hold any more booty, she resisted the temptation that beckoned to her from every side, and trotted along obediently with Peter. The goats, too, were now somewhat easier to manage, for they had caught the scent of certain pungent herbs, and pressed forward eagerly toward the plateau, where, in the middle of the morning, Peter always stopped to rest. It lay at the foot of a high cliff, clothed with underbrush and fir-trees, and on the farther side terminated on the brink of a steep precipice that proved the wisdom of the Alm-Uncle's warning.

Peter unslung his haversack, and having deposited it

carefully in a little hollow, stretched himself on the warm grass, while Heidi seated herself on a mound near by and began to arrange her flowers. When she had sorted them carefully, she took off her shirt, rolled the flowers up in it, and tucked the bundle away in the haversack, along with the bread and cheese. Then she settled herself to take in the view.

A soft wind stirred the harebells and the rock-roses, its faint whisper barely audible in the deep, all-pervading stillness of the heights, and Peter, lulled by its gentle melody, and wearied by his exertions, had promptly fallen asleep. But Heidi, bright eyed, and quiet as a mouse, sat drinking in the peaceful beauty of the scene. Below, the valley lay serene and smiling in the warmth of the morning sun, and in the distance rose the massive summits of the mountains, crowned with snow. Yet those jagged peaks, that loomed up austere and even terrible in their harsh barrenness, became ever more familiar to her as she gazed at them, until they were no longer terrible, but friendly, and it seemed to her that she had known and loved them all her life.

She wanted nothing more than to stay just as she was, forever, drinking in the golden sunlight, and the clear, pure air, and the tender fragrance of the herbs and flowers.

A long time passed, while Peter slumbered, and the goats nibbled and munched among the bushes; then, all at once a harsh scream startled the little girl from her reverie. Overhead, a huge bird was circling through

the air on wide-stretched wings, and uttering its shrill cries.

"Peter! Peter! Wake up!" cried Heidi in terror. "It's the eagle!"

The boy started to his feet, but already the great bird was rising higher and higher into the air, and as they both stood gazing upward with wide eyes, it vanished beyond the grey peaks of the mountain.

"Where has he gone?" asked Heidi, turning a wondering face to Peter.

"Home. To his nest."

"Is it way up there, really? Oh, it must be beautiful to live up in the crags like that!" exclaimed Heidi with shining eyes. "But why does he scream so?"

"Because—why, because he has to," was Peter's learned explanation.

"Let's climb up and see his nest!" cried Heidi, springing up; but Peter checked her enthusiasm with a jeering laugh.

"Yes! I'd like to see you! Why, not even a goat can climb up there! And you'd better take care, too—the Alm-Uncle said you were to keep away from the cliffs." With this, he turned and began to whistle to his goats. They came, pushing and butting at each other with their horns, and while Heidi played with them, shouting with laughter at their droll antics, Peter proceeded stolidly to lay out the midday meal. Having spread the haversack out on the grass to serve for the table-cloth, he put Heidi's generous portions of bread and cheese on one side, and his own scanty provisions

on the other, and then, following the Alm-Uncle's instructions, took the cup and milked Little Swan until it was brimming.

"Come on, now," he called at last. "It's time to eat."

Heidi seated herself on the grass.

"Is the milk mine?" she asked.

Peter nodded.

"And so are the two big pieces of bread and cheese."

"Where is your milk?" asked Heidi.

"Oh, I get mine from my own goat—that spotted one over there. Now let's begin."

They fell to with hearty appetites, but after a few minutes Heidi broke off a big piece of bread and cheese from her share, and held it out to Peter, saying briefly:

"You can eat that, too, if you like—I've had enough."

Peter merely gaped at her—unable to believe that anybody ever had enough to eat; but when she laid her offering on his knee, he saw that she was in earnest, and with a brusque nod of thanks, fell upon it, without waiting to tempt fortune a moment longer.

"Now," said Heidi, when he had devoured the last crumb of that unforgetable meal, "tell me the names of all the goats, Peter."

Promptly the boy began to point them out, one by one, giving their names without a single hesitation—for, in truth, he had not much else to carry about in his curly head,—and Heidi listened attentively. The big one who was always bullying the little ones, and butting and pushing his comrades with his strong horns, was

Turk. None of the others dared to defy him but the slender, graceful Thistlefinch, who often astonished and even intimidated the bigger goat by his boldness and aggressiveness. The little white one was Snowhopper, a most mournful little animal, who bleated so piteously that at length Heidi was greatly distressed by his plaintive cries, and running to him, embraced him tenderly.

"What *is* the matter with you, poor, dear little Snowhopper?" she besought him. "Why are you crying so?"

"He makes a fuss because the old one was taken away yesterday, and sold at the market in Mayenfeld," Peter explained.

"What old one?"

"His mother."

"Where is his grandmother, then?" asked Heidi.

"Hasn't any."

"Then where is his grandfather?"

"Hasn't any grandfather either," replied Peter, without emotion.

"Oh, you poor, *poor* little Snowhopper!" cried Heidi, embracing the orphan pitifully. "Don't cry any more —I'll come with you every day, so you won't be alone, and if anything makes you sad you can come right to me."

Apparently Snowhopper understood that his woes had at last aroused some compassion, for he snuggled contentedly in Heidi's arm, and no longer filled the air with his plaintive bleating.

"The prettiest of all are Little Swan and Little Bear,"

Heidi remarked presently, after a critical comparison of all the goats.

"I know. That's because the Alm-Uncle washes them himself, and gives them plenty of salt, and has much the best stable for them —— Hey!" Peter broke off with a cry of alarm, and leaping to his feet, sprang forward with Heidi hard at his heels. The rash Thistlefinch had strayed perilously near the precipice, and was in great danger of tumbling headlong down to the jagged rocks below, on which an ill-starred goat would break every bone in his body. Peter flung himself down on the ground, and seized Thistlefinch by one leg; whereupon the foolhardy little creature set up a shrill and angry bleating, and, struggling to free his leg from Peter's frantic grasp, drew them both still nearer to the brink of the precipice.

"Heidi! Heidi!" shouted Peter; but Heidi had already seen the danger, and quickly gathering a handful of sweet smelling herbs, she held them out under Thistlefinch's nose.

"Come now,—don't be silly, Thistlefinch," she coaxed. "Don't you know that if you fell down on those rocks you'd break your leg? And that would hurt you dreadfully."

Thistlefinch was beguiled; and ceasing to struggle, followed Heidi, nibbling eagerly at the herbs that she held out to him, while she moved back from the precipice. But Peter, who had been badly frightened, felt that he had a score to settle with the rebellious goat, and having led him back safely to the flock, holding him by

the rope on which the little bell tinkled gaily, prepared to administer the just and proper punishment. But, as he raised his stick to beat the luckless Thistlefinch, Heidi caught his arm.

"No, no, Peter!" she cried, clinging to him with all her strength. "You *mustn't* beat him! See how frightened he is. Don't touch him."

"He deserves it, and he's going to catch it," growled Peter. "Let go my arm."

"I say you sha'n't!" cried Heidi, stamping her foot. "I won't let you!"

Peter gaped at her in utter amazement, for he had never seen her angry before; but after a moment he let his stick fall. It had occurred to him that he might strike a profitable bargain.

"Well," said he, "I'll let him alone if you'll give me some of your bread and cheese again to-morrow."

"All of it! You can have all of it—to-morrow and every day—I don't want it!" cried Heidi, breathlessly. "But you must never, never beat Thistlefinch or Snowhopper or any of the goats. Do you hear?"

"It's all one to me," said Peter, with a shrug; and with that he released the captive, who joyfully bounded away from the unpleasant grasp of the law.

The day drew gradually to an end, and the sun was beginning to sink beyond the western rim of snow-capped mountain peaks. Heidi now sat quietly on the grass, watching the golden light that drew its long fingers in a last caress over the green slopes and the nodding flowers. Then, all at once, over the distant

pinnacles there broke forth a splendor so sublime that the child cried out in awe and wonder.

"Peter! Peter! The mountains are on fire! The snow and the whole sky are burning! Oh, the beautiful fiery snow! Look, look, Peter! There is fire over the eagle's nest, and on the rocks and fir-trees! Everything is on fire!"

"It's always like that," said Peter calmly. "That isn't really fire."

"What is it then? What is it, Peter?" cried Heidi, running back and forth in the attempt to take in the glory of the whole blazing horizon.

"I don't know. It just gets that way by itself," said Peter.

"Oh, everything is all rosy now! See that sharp peak with the snow on it! What is its name, Peter?"

"Mountains don't have names."

"Now the snow is rosy, too! Oh, it looks as if many, many roses were covering those sharp rocks!"

Then, slowly, the splendor began to fade, until the sky was ashes, and the calm grey shades of twilight began to steal over the mountain peaks, which a moment before had been wrapped in the miracle of light. Heidi flung herself on the ground in despair, as if everything had come to an end with the passing of the royal sun.

"It'll be just like that again to-morrow," said Peter, who was placidly peeling his hazel-rod. "Better get up now—it's time to go home."

"But will it really be just like that to-morrow—and every day when we come to the pastures?"

"It usually is."

"But it will *certainly* be just like that to-morrow, won't it?" urged Heidi.

"Yes, yes—to-morrow it will be just like that."

This assurance comforted Heidi; but her thoughts were so occupied with all the events of the day, that she did not utter another word until they reached the hut.

The Alm-Uncle was waiting for them, seated on his bench under the fir-trees, and Heidi, followed by Little Swan and Little Bear, who knew their master quite as well as Heidi did, ran to him eagerly.

"Good-night," called Peter, waving his stick. "Don't forget to come with me again to-morrow!"

Heidi hastened back to him, and giving him her hand, promised to be ready for him the next morning; then she bent down to embrace the melancholy Snowhopper who snuggled against her as if pleading for one last word of consolation.

"Sleep well, little Snowhopper," said Heidi, tenderly. "And remember that you are not to cry any more, because I shall always go with you to the pastures."

"Well," said the Alm-Uncle, when Peter had departed with his flock, "how did it go with you?"

Heidi's black eyes sparkled.

"Oh, Grandfather! It was *so* beautiful! You should have seen the sky—all rosy, and the snow on the mountains all red so that they looked as if they were covered with roses! And look! Look here!" she cried, shak-

ing out her precious bundle of flowers. "See what I brought back to you, Grandfather!"

But alas! the bright nosegay that she had so diligently gathered in the morning was now only a dry, lifeless, withered heap.

"Grandfather! What's the matter with them?" cried poor Heidi, terrified at their changed appearance.

"Why, flowers, I think, are better off when they are left to grow in the bright sunlight than when they are smothered up in a bundle," said the Alm-Uncle with a smile, and then he bade her go and bathe herself, while he milked the goats and prepared their supper.

A little later, Heidi, fresh and clean from her tubbing, was perched up on her stool beside her grandfather, with a brimming cup of milk before her.

"Grandfather," she asked, "why does the eagle scream so?" Evidently she had not found Peter's explanation entirely satisfactory.

The old man's face changed, and he did not answer her immediately; then, with a strange gleam in his eyes, he said:

"He is jeering at the people who pass their miserable lives in the crowded towns and villages below—huddled together like sheep, and making one another wretched!" As he spoke his voice rose until it seemed to take on the shrill, harsh note of the eagle's cry. "And he says to them, 'If any one of you dared to come away from the herd, and to take his way alone to the heights, as I do, I would not despise him!'"

Heidi was startled and almost frightened by his unexpected violence, and for a time both of them were silent. But presently Heidi asked again:

"Why don't the mountains have names, Grandfather?"

"They do have names, and if you can describe them to me so that I know which ones you mean, I'll tell you what they are called."

So Heidi described each of the different mountains, and he gave her the names of every one, proving that Master Peter had been quite wrong about the matter.

"And where did all the fire come from, Grandfather? I asked Peter but he didn't know."

"Well," said the Alm-Uncle, "it is like this: when the sun says 'Good-night' to the mountains he throws over them all his most beautiful colors so that they will not forget him before he comes back to them in the morning."

Heidi was delighted with this explanation. And now that bedtime had come, she climbed up happily to her loft, where, soon sleeping soundly in the soft and fragrant hay, she dreamed all night of glistening snow-clad mountain peaks bathed in a rosy fire, and of flower-studded slopes where little Snowhopper pranced and capered gleefully.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GRANDMOTHER'S COTTAGE

Day after day Heidi and Peter went up to pasture with the goats, and as the summer passed, Heidi grew as brown as a berry, and so sturdy and strong that she never knew a moment's sickness. Her life on the Alm was as joyous and care-free as that of a bird in the forest.

Then Autumn came, and there were mornings when the wind blew so harsh and cold over the mountains that the Alm-Uncle was afraid to let her go with Peter.

"These rough winds could carry a little one like you away over the cliffs and down into the valley at one puff!" he said.

Peter was always much disappointed when his companion was forced to stay at home, for, aside from the fact that he found his own company extremely dull without her, he also regretted the loss of his double meal at midday, when Heidi was wont to give him a very generous share of her own. But Heidi, although she liked best to go with Peter and the goats, aways found plenty of things to amuse and interest her on the days that she spent down at the hut with her grandfather. She found the process of cheese-making quite wonderful, when the Alm-Uncle, with both arms bare to the elbows, churned his whey until it was ready to shape into the neat round cheeses that he took to the market at

Mayenfeld. Then again, when he was busy with his hammer and saw in his workshop, it was interesting to watch him deftly carving and planing the wood from which he made all kinds of useful articles. But above all, Heidi loved best to listen to the ceaseless, mysterious music of the wind in the great fir-trees outside the hut, whose varying tones, now low and murmuring, now wild and loud, thrilled her whole soul.

The warmth of the sun was waning steadily from day to day, and soon Heidi had to put on her dress and her shoes and stockings; and Peter, when he came by with his flock early in the morning, was always blowing on his stubby red hands to keep them warm. Then, suddenly, one night the snow fell, and in the morning not a single green leaf was visible above the dazzling white blanket that covered the whole Alm. Winter had come, and after that Peter appeared no more with his goats.

The snow fell more and more thickly, until it was so deep that it reached up to the windows of the hut; and presently, not even the windows were any longer visible. It seemed to Heidi, who was beside herself with excitement, that soon the whole hut would be buried, and the grandfather would have to keep a lamp burning inside all day long. But before this happened the snow stopped falling, and at last the Alm-Uncle had a chance to shovel it away from the door, piling it up in great heaps that looked like mountains around the hut.

That same day, just as Heidi and her grandfather were finishing their midday meal in front of the fire, there came a loud thumping and scuffling on the thresh-

old outside, and a moment later the door was pushed open to admit Master Peter, who stood there, beaming and triumphant. From head to foot he was covered with frozen snow, for he had had to make his way through almost impassable drifts; but it had been eight whole days since he had seen Heidi, and Peter, who had a dogged determination of his own, had not been willing to wait any longer.

"Good-afternoon," said he; then, seating himself as close to the fire as possible, he looked at Heidi without uttering another word, though his round face was beaming with satisfaction.

Heidi stared back at him in astonishment, for as the fire began to thaw him, the melting snow ran down from his clothes in countless waterfalls.

"Well, how goes the world with you, Goat-general?" asked the Alm-Uncle. "Your army has gone into winter quarters, and so you are left to gnaw the pencil, eh?"

"Why does he have to gnaw pencils, Grandfather?" inquired Heidi, in surprise.

"Because, in the winter he has to go to school where one learns to read and write. It's a hard business, but it helps if one can chew up a few pencils while he struggles. Eh, Peter?"

"Yes, it does help," said Peter seriously.

Instantly, Heidi had a hundred questions to ask him about school, and Peter, who always had difficulty in expressing his ideas in words, was hard put to it, especially as Heidi barely allowed him time to answer one question before she asked another. But they chatted

away merrily, while the hot fire dried Peter's dripping clothes, and the short winter afternoon wore away.

At length the Alm-Uncle interrupted their conversation with the suggestion that Peter might be ready for a bite to eat. Peter was always ready for a bite to eat, and when the old man had set forth their supper, you may be sure that the hungry little goatherd did full justice to the slices of dried meat and bread which the Alm-Uncle measured out to him in portions that made his greedy eyes grow big with wonder.

By the time supper was over, night had fallen, and Peter, now strongly fortified against wind and weather, rose to go; but at the door he stopped, and fixing his eyes on Heidi, announced:

"I shall come again on Sunday. And Granny says, will you please come and see her, Heidi?"

With this, he took himself off.

The idea of going to visit someone was an entirely new one for Heidi, and for the next three or four days she continually besought her grandfather to take her down to see Granny. But the snow was still too deep for her to venture forth. At last, however, the sun, which seemed to have forsaken the Alm completely, shone out once more, and when Heidi again asked the Alm-Uncle to take her down the mountain to the grandmother's cottage, he laughed, and telling her to wrap herself up warmly in the sack that she used for her bedcover, bade her to come along.

At the sight of the glittering white world that met her eyes as she left the hut for the first time since the

snow had fallen, Heidi stopped short in wonder and delight. The fir-trees stood silent and motionless, as if a spell had fallen upon them, and every bough was weighted down with the snow that sparkled in the sunlight so that it dazzled the sight.

"Grandfather!" cried Heidi. "Come and look! The trees have been changed to gold and silver!"

The Alm-Uncle, who now appeared from the workshop dragging his sled behind him, looked and marvelled until his enthusiasm had satisfied her. Then he tucked her up warmly on the sled, seated himself behind her and held her closely to him with his left arm. A moment later, they were flying down the mountainside through the crackling snow, so swiftly that they seemed rather to be flying through the air as if the sled had wings; and in almost no time at all, they had reached the goatherd's cottage.

"There you are," said the Alm-Uncle, as he freed Heidi from her wrappings and set her down on the ground. "Run on in, but remember that as soon as it begins to grow dark you must start for home."

With that he turned about, and dragging his sled behind him, made his way back up the mountain.

The grandmother's cottage was not a cowherd's hut like the Alm-Uncle's, with a single large room below and a loft above, but rather, a tiny ancient house where everything was old and narrow and warped. The first room that Heidi entered was a kitchen, tiny and dark, at the farther side of which a door led to a second room but little larger than the first. Here, at the table a

woman was sitting mending a waistcoat which Heidi immediately recognized as Peter's, and in the corner a little, withered old dame was spinning flax.

Without a moment's hesitation, Heidi walked over to the spinning-wheel; then, stopping and looking at the old lady, she said clearly:

"Good-day, Granny—here I am. Did you think it was a long time before I came to see you?"

At the sound of the fresh voice the old woman raised her head, and groped for the hand that Heidi had stretched out to her. Then when she had found it, she stroked it softly for a moment or two without speaking.

"Is it really Heidi?" she asked at length. "Are you the child who lives now with the Alm-Uncle?"

"Yes, I am Heidi. My grandfather brought me to see you. We came down the mountain in the sled."

"In the sled?" repeated Granny, in her quavering voice. "And yet the little hand is so warm! Brigida, did the Alm-Uncle himself really bring the child?"

Peter's mother had risen from her chair at the table, and was looking intently at Heidi.

"I don't know," she replied. "It's not likely that the Alm-Uncle himself would have brought her. No doubt the child is mistaken."

"No," said Heidi, returning the younger woman's gaze steadily, "I am not mistaken. I know quite well who wrapped me up in the big sack, and brought me here on the sled. It *was* my grandfather."

"Then," said Granny slowly, after a pause, "it was

true what Peter told us about the child that was living up on the Alm. But who could have believed it? I doubted the child would have stayed there a fortnight. Tell me now, Brigida, what does she look like?"

"She is slender and small like her mother, Adelheid," Brigida answered, "and has black eyes and curly hair such as Tobias had—and the Alm-Uncle, too, when he was young. She resembles them both."

Heidi had not been listening to this description of herself, but was looking about her and observing all the details of the tiny room.

"Look, Granny!" she exclaimed, pointing to the window, "the shutter is loose. My grandfather could fix it with a nail so that it wouldn't swing back and forth like that. It might break the window-pane, and then all the cold would come in. See there!"

"You good child, I cannot see it, but I can hear it very well, and it is not only the shutters that rattle and bang—when the wind blows hard at night, and the others are sleeping soundly, I hear the whole house reeking and groaning, so that I am in terror lest it will fall down and kill us all. But no one can do anything about it, for Peterkin doesn't understand how to use hammer and nails."

"But why can't you *see* how the shutter swings, Granny?" asked Heidi in a puzzled tone. "There it is—right behind you."

"I cannot see anything," answered the old woman, simply.

"Oh—but if I go outside and push the shutters back

so that there is more light, then you will be able to see, won't you?"

"No, no, child—no one can ever make it light for me again."

"But if you come out where all the white snow is shining, you will be able to see, Granny!" cried Heidi, taking the old woman's withered hand, and trying to draw her toward the door. But Granny only smiled sadly.

"Let me be, my child," she said, gently. "Not even the beautiful white snow can bring the light again to my old eyes."

A look of horror dawned gradually on Heidi's face.

"But in summer, Granny," she pleaded, "when the sun says good-night to the mountains, and the peaks are all on fire, and the yellow flowers shine in the grass ——"

"Ah, child, never again in this world will my eyes look upon the mountains and the little golden flowers. I am quite blind."

Heidi covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Granny, Granny!" she sobbed, heart-brokenly. "Can't *anyone* make you see again?"

The old woman tried to comfort her, but, although Heidi very seldom cried, she felt sorrow as deeply as she felt joy, and Granny, whose heart ached to hear a little girl's sobbing, could not console her for a long time.

"Dear child, listen, and I will tell you something,"

she said, taking Heidi's hand in hers. "When one cannot see one hears all the more gladly a kindly word, and yours have made me very happy. Come now, sit here beside me, and tell me what you do up there on the Alm. I knew your grandfather well, long ago, but I have heard nothing of him for many years, except what Peterkin tells me, and he knows very little."

Heidi dried her tears.

"Just wait, Granny," she said, her face brightening with a new hope. "I will tell Grandfather everything. *He* can make you see again, and he'll fix the cottage so that it won't rattle and shake any more, and everything will be right again."

Then, her cheerfulness restored by this plan in which she had perfect confidence, she began to chatter away brightly, telling the old woman all about her life on the Alm. Granny listened attentively, now and then murmuring:

"Did you hear that, Brigida? Do you hear what she says about the Alm-Uncle?"

Their talk was at last interrupted by a noisy banging of the door, and in came Peter, who, seeing Heidi, stopped short, while a grin of delight spread slowly over his face.

"Good-evening, Peter," said Heidi, gayly.

"What!" exclaimed Granny, in astonishment. "Is it already time for the boy to be back from school? It has been many a year since the day has passed so quickly for me. Good-evening, Peterkin—how did the reading go to-day?"

"Just the same."

The old woman sighed.

"Dear, dear! I thought there might be a change—you are nearly twelve years old, Peterkin."

"What kind of change, Granny?" Heidi asked.

"Why, I had hoped that he might be able to read by now," said the grandmother wistfully. "You see, I have a book—full of lovely hymns that I haven't heard these many years, and I cannot remember them any more. I hoped that Peter might learn to read them to me, but they are too hard for him."

Brigida, who had been sitting in silence, busied with her sewing, now rose to light the lamp.

"Yes," she said, "for me, too, the afternoon has passed very quickly."

Heidi sprang up. "I must go, Grandmother," she said. "I promised Grandfather that I would come home just as soon as it got dark."

"But wait, wait, child!" cried the old woman, as Heidi started toward the door. "You cannot go alone—Peter will go with you. And see that you take care of the child, Peterkin. Have you a thick shawl, Heidi? You will be frozen!"

"I haven't got a shawl, but I won't freeze," answered Heidi, and with that she ran out, followed by Peter.

"Go after them, Brigida," Granny commanded, "and put my shawl on the child."

Brigida obeyed, but just as she emerged from the cottage, she saw the Alm-Uncle himself striding down the mountainside.

"Well, I see that you are as good as your word, Heidi," she heard him say, and with that he quickly wrapped the child in the shawl that he carried, picked her up in his arms, and made off again toward the Alm, leaving Brigida to gape in astonishment.

Then she hastened indoors to describe what she had seen to her mother.

"Well, God be praised that he is so gentle with the child!" exclaimed the old woman. "God be praised! If only he will let her come again to see me! What a kind, friendly little heart—I feel as if she had made me well again! Now indeed there is something in the world that can give me joy!"

Meanwhile, Heidi, muffled up in her grandfather's arms, was trying to tell him in a single breath all the details of her visit; but the sack was so thick that he could not understand a word of what she was saying.

"Wait—wait until we get home, child!" said he, "then you can tell me all about it."

As soon as they had reached the hut, Heidi unrolled herself from her thick cocoon, and began again, breathlessly:

"Grandfather, to-morrow we must take the hammer and nails and fix Granny's cottage so that it doesn't creak and rattle any more!"

"Eh? Must? We *must?*" repeated the Alm-Uncle, drawing his fierce eyebrows together. "Who told you that?"

"Nobody told me," said Heidi. "But, you see, the cottage is old and shaky, and when the wind blows it

makes such noises that Granny gets frightened, and can't sleep. And do you know, Grandfather, she cannot see! She says that no one can make it light for her again. But I told her that you could. Think how terrible it must be for her when everything is always black! No one can help her but you, so we'll go to-morrow, Grandfather, won't we?"

For a few moments the Alm-Uncle said nothing, but looked steadily into Heidi's black eyes that shone with unquestioning confidence in him; then he said, briefly:

"Yes, we will go to-morrow."

He kept his promise. Early the following morning the sled was flying down to the cottage, where, as on the day before, the Alm-Uncle bade Heidi go in, and to remember to leave as soon as the darkness fell. Then he himself went around to the back of the little house.

Heidi had barely unlatched the door, when the whirr of the spinning-wheel stopped and the blind woman, stretching out both hands, cried joyfully:

"It's the child!"

Heidi ran to her, and, drawing a little stool close to her side, began to tell the old dame a thousand new things. But in the midst of her lively chatter, the whole cottage suddenly trembled under the force of repeated blows.

"Dear God!" shrieked Granny, starting up, white and shaking with terror. "Now it is really falling upon us!" and she seized her spinning-wheel as if to save it from the impending catastrophe. But Heidi caught her arm.

"No, no, Granny!" she hastily reassured her. "Don't

be frightened—Grandfather is just hammering in his big nails to make the walls safe so that you needn't be anxious any more."

The poor old woman could hardly believe her ears.

"Did you hear that, Brigida?" she asked in a quavering voice. "Can it be possible, do you think? Yet it is really the sound of a hammer—God has not forgotten us! Go, Brigida! If it is truly the Alm-Uncle himself ask him to come in—if only for a moment, and let me thank him!"

Brigida went, and found that it was indeed the Alm-Uncle who was busily driving stout wooden wedges into the cracks in the walls, to keep the cold wind from blowing through them. Not without some awe and dread, she approached him, and timidly bade him good-day.

"Granny asks that you will step inside only a moment," she added, "so that she can thank you herself for doing us this service—certainly there are few who would have had the goodness, and we should not have thought ——"

"That will do," interrupted the old man, harshly. "I know well enough what you think of the Alm-Uncle! Go in again. I can find what needs mending for myself."

Brigida obeyed him without a word, for no one had the courage to dispute anything that the Alm-Uncle said.

He went on quietly with his work, nailing up loosened boards, mending the gaps in walls and roof, and fasten-

ing the broken, creaking shutters. By the time he had finished, it was nightfall, and Heidi ran to him from the cottage just as he was bringing his sled around to the door. Without a word, he again lifted her in his arms, and carried her up the mountain.

Thus the winter passed, bringing into the life of the old blind grandmother a new joy. Her days were no longer dark and melancholy, for even when Heidi was not with her she had the delight of looking forward to her visits, and as soon as she heard the little girl's light step, she would exclaim:

"Ah, God be thanked--it is the child!"

And Heidi's bright chatter made the time pass so swiftly that now instead of asking Brigida again and again if the day were not nearly over, she marvelled each time her little visitor rose to go, how the hours could have slipped away.

"May the good God bless the child," she said to her daughter. "And keep the Alm-Uncle's heart soft toward her. Does she look well, Brigida?"

"She is as sound and rosy as a ripe apple," was Brigida's reply.

Often, while Heidi chattered to the two women indoors, the Alm-Uncle stayed to make some repairs outside the cottage, and so well did he do his work that even when the fiercest winds blew down the mountain the walls and shutters no longer groaned and shook; so that, instead of lying awake at night in terror, Granny could sleep as she had not slept in years.

CHAPTER FIVE

VISITORS ON THE ALM

Two winters had passed, and Heidi was now nearly eight years old. Her grandfather had taught her a great many things, and she was as good a little goat-herd as Peter himself; but messages were beginning to come to the Alm-Uncle from the schoolmaster in Dorfli, stating that it was high time that the child should be brought to attend the village school. The old man's reply to these hints was carried back by Peter, and merely informed the schoolmaster that if he had anything to say to the Alm-Uncle he could come to see him in person, and that he had no intention of sending Heidi to school. And thus, for the time being, the matter rested.

The warm March sun had already melted the snow on the mountain slopes, and in the valley the crocuses were beginning to thrust up their little heads quite boldly, while, on the Alm, the fir-trees, having shaken off their winter burden of snow, now tossed their branches in the soft spring wind.

One sunny morning, Heidi was skipping joyously in and out of the hut, now running to the goat-stall, now back again to call her grandfather to see how green the grass was getting under the trees; when suddenly she was startled by the unexpected appearance of an elderly man, dressed in black, who was regarding her steadily

and gravely. Seeing that he had frightened her, he hastened to reassure her in a gentle tone.

"Don't be afraid of me," he said. "I am very fond of children. I think that you must be Heidi? Will you give me your hand, and tell me where I can find your grandfather?"

"He is in the hut," said Heidi, giving the stranger her hand, "making wooden spoons." And she led him indoors, where the Alm-Uncle was sitting at the table, busy with his work. At the sound of the visitor's friendly greeting, he raised his head, and a gleam came into his dark eyes, under the bristling brows; but, rising from his stool, he said quietly:

"Good-day, Pastor."

"It has been a long time since I have seen you, neighbor," said the Pastor, seating himself on the wooden stool that the Alm-Uncle had drawn up for him.

"And since I have seen you, Pastor."

"I have come to-day," the visitor continued, "to discuss a certain matter with you, neighbor," and with a meaning glance at Heidi, he added, "Perhaps, indeed, you have already guessed what my business is."

"Heidi," said the Alm-Uncle, "run away and play with the goats. Take them some salt, and stay with them until I come."

"The child should have been sent to school a year ago," said the Pastor, when Heidi had gone. "And certainly you should have let her attend this winter, neighbor. The schoolmaster has sent word to you several times, without receiving any satisfactory answer,

and now it is my duty to ask you what your intentions are in regard to the child."

"It is my intention *not* to send her to school," returned the Alm-Uncle, grimly.

The Pastor looked with perplexity and distress at the old man, who, with his arms folded, returned the gaze with one of unconcealed hostility.

"But what do you intend to make of the child?" the Pastor asked, after a pause.

"Nothing! She grows and thrives with the goats—with the birds, and all innocent things, and she learns no evil from them!"

"But the child is a human being! It may be true that she learns no evil, but she learns nothing else either. Let me urge you to think over this matter," said the Pastor, earnestly. "Think it over during this summer, and send her, I beg you, to the school next winter."

"No," returned the Alm-Uncle inflexibly. "I will not do that."

"But do you think, then, that there is no way to *compel* you to come to reason?" demanded the Pastor, beginning to get a little heated. "You have been in the world, and you know its laws! I should have credited you with a little more common sense, at least!"

"And does the good Pastor really believe," interrupted the old man, in a rough voice that betrayed his rising anger, "that on freezing winter mornings, when often it is so stormy that I myself am nearly buried by the

snow, I should send a frail child down to the village every day? A two-hour walk—then back again at night! Does the Pastor remember her mother, Adelheid? She was a sleep-walker, and had long spells of fainting. Do you think I am going to bring Heidi to such a state by exhausting her strength? Let them try to compel me, I say! I tell you I am quite ready to bring the matter into the courts, if that's what they want, and then we shall see whether they can compel me or not!"

After this threatening outburst, the Pastor adopted a more conciliating tone.

"You are quite right, neighbor," said he. "So long as you continue to live here it is certainly not possible to send the child to school. But I am convinced that you love her very deeply, and therefore, for her sake I beg you to do what would have been so much the best for you to have done long ago—come down to Dorfli, and live again among your fellow-men. What kind of life is it that you lead up here in this solitude? If anything should happen to you, who would there be to care for you? I cannot imagine how you have not frozen to death up here in the winter! And to expose a tender child to such hardship!"

The Alm-Uncle's eyes flashed, but he said calmly:

"The child has young blood, and warm clothing. Moreover, I know where to find wood and plenty of it! If the Pastor will look into the shed he will see that there is fuel sufficient to keep my fire burning the winter through." After a short pause, he went on in a

tone of suppressed violence, "As for your urging me to go back to Dorfli, Pastor—I tell you that it is simply waste of breath. The villagers despise me, and I despise them! It's best for all concerned that we should keep apart!"

"No, no—it is not best!" cried the good Pastor, earnestly. "Neighbor, I beg you,—first make your peace with God,—pray to Him for forgiveness—then come, and you will see how happily you can live with mankind!" As he spoke, he rose from his stool, and held out his hand. "I shall count upon it, that next winter you and I will be neighbors again, as in old times. Give me your hand on it, my friend—promise me that you will make your peace with God and man, and come and live amongst us once more."

The Alm-Uncle took the outstretched hand, but looking steadily into the Pastor's kind eyes, he answered:

"I know that you mean well, but I tell you again, and I say it plainly without beating about the bush—I will not send the child to school, and I will not go back to live in Dorfli!"

"Then—may God be with you!" said the Pastor sadly, and he went away.

All afternoon the Alm-Uncle was silent and moody, and when Heidi asked him to take her down to see Granny, he refused her brusquely. The following morning his face was still clouded, and again when the child asked to go down to the goatherd's cottage, he put her off with a short, "Not to-day."

Without saying anything more, Heidi busied herself

about the hut. Shortly after midday, when she was putting away the cups and spoons, a second visitor appeared in the doorway; this time a young woman, smartly dressed, with a feather cocked jauntily in her trim new hat, and an affable smile on her face. It was Dete.

The Alm-Uncle raised his head, and simply glared at her without uttering a word; but Dete was disposed not to recognize his hostility and to make herself very agreeable indeed. Accordingly, she began at once to exclaim how well Heidi was looking, how she had grown, how easily one could see that she had thriven in her grandfather's care! "But," she added, leading up artfully to the point of her unexpected visit, "I realize that she must be a burden to you, Uncle. Of course, when I brought her to you I simply had no other choice, as you understood, but I always intended to take her off your hands again as soon as I was able to. Now, Heidi," she said, turning to the little girl, as the Alm-Uncle sat eyeing her in stony silence, "there is a wonderful surprise in store for you, such as you wouldn't guess in a thousand years!"

Without waiting to be urged to unfold her tale, she proceeded to describe the nature of this fine surprise with the greatest vivacity. There was a very rich family in Frankfort, she said, related to her employers, in which the only child, a little girl, was an invalid. Unable to play with other children, she passed a lonely life at home, without any young companions to bring her interest and diversion, or to share her studies. The

lady who was in charge of this household had spoken to Dete's employers about the matter, and had told them that if they could find a well-brought-up, unspoiled child fitted to be a companion for the little invalid, she should live with her in the fine house as if she were one of the family. Dete, who was not the person to let a good opportunity slip her grasp, had instantly thought of her niece, and had promptly furnished such a favorable account of her that the lady had agreed to try her for the position.

"It's a piece of luck one would never have dreamed of!" declared Dete. "Why, a thousand good things might come of it—for instance, once you are there, and these people should take a fancy to you, so that they should come to look upon you as their own daughter—well, one never can tell! And the little girl is very delicate—if anything should happen to her, now—the father would certainly not want to lose his *other* daughter, you see, and who knows but that ——"

"Have you finished?" interrupted the Alm-Uncle in an ominous tone. So far he had not spoken a single word.

"You talk as if I'd brought the most ordinary news in the world!" cried Dete. "Why, there isn't a soul in Prattigau wouldn't thank Heaven for such a splendid piece of luck ——!"

"Then," said the Alm-Uncle evenly, and without taking his black eyes from her face, "take it to those who can better appreciate it. I will have none of it! Do you hear?"

At this, Dete lost her temper completely, and with it all her diplomatic cunning.

"Then you shall hear a thing or two that you won't like, Uncle!" she burst out in unconcealed fury. "Listen! Don't I know that Heidi is eight years old already? Yet in Dorfli they tell me that you refuse to send her either to school or to the church—that you refuse to let her learn anything! Well, she's the child of my only sister, and I'm responsible for her—don't forget that! I won't give in to you, and, what's more, if I choose to bring the matter to court there isn't a soul in Dorfli who won't take my part against you. And there's another thing you'd do well to remember, Uncle—if you force me to go to court, some old matters that you'd rather keep buried may be brought to light! For the law has a way of tracing down things that one thinks have long been forgotten!"

"Silence!" thundered the Alm-Uncle, bringing his powerful fist down upon the table with a crash. "Take the child! Ruin her! But never let me see her face again! And never dare to bring her to me with a miserable feather in her hat, and such words in her mouth as you have spoken to-day!" With this he turned, and strode out of the hut.

"You have made him angry!" cried Heidi, turning upon her aunt with fire in her eyes.

"He'll get over it!" said Dete, shortly. "Get your clothes and come along."

"I will not come!"

"What do you say?" cried Dete furiously; then she

controlled herself quickly and changed her tone. "Come now, Heidi—don't be silly," she coaxed. "You don't understand—why, it's all for your own good, child." And as she spoke she went to the cupboard, and began to wrap up Heidi's clothes in a bundle. "There now—here's your little hat. It's pretty shabby, but it will do for the time being. Put it on, and come quickly."

"I'm not coming," said Heidi.

"Don't be stubborn, Heidi—like a little goat! Didn't you understand what your grandfather said? He's angry and he never wants to see us again. He *wants* you to go with me, and you had better not get him still more angry. Besides, you have no idea how lovely it is in Frankfort, and what interesting things you will see there. If you don't like it you can come back here again—that is, if the old man gets into a better frame of mind."

"Can I come back to-night?" demanded Heidi.

"Oh, come along, and don't be silly. Didn't I tell you that you can come back when you want to? To-day we are going to Mayenfeld, and then early to-morrow morning we will take the railroad train, and, if you like, we can be back here again in no time at all!" Thus Dete, holding the bundle under one arm, succeeded in coaxing Heidi along, and together they made their way down the mountain.

It was not yet the season when the goats went to pasture, and Peter should, by rights, have been in school, but now and then the young man graciously al-

lowed himself to take a holiday. If he had any misgivings as to the wrong and right of playing truant, he put them to rest by arguing with himself that it was not really necessary to learn to read and write, since one never had any use for such accomplishments, and that it was really better to spend one's time hunting for good hazel-rods, since they were very useful articles indeed.

Thus it happened that Heidi and her aunt came upon him as he was plodding toward the cottage with a huge bundle of switches on his shoulder.

"Where are you going?" he asked, stopping short and staring at them in wonder.

"I'm going to Frankfort," said Heidi. "But first, Aunt Dete, I must go in and see Granny—she's expecting me."

"No, no—we haven't time, I tell you, Heidi," said Dete, quickly tightening her hold of Heidi's hand. "You can see her when you come back." And fearful lest the child should rebel again, she hurried her along until Heidi was fairly running.

Peter, meanwhile, had gone storming into the cottage, and flinging his bundle of switches onto the table, burst out in such an uproar of grief and rage that his old grandmother sprang up from the spinning-wheel in a fright.

"What's the matter? What has happened, Peter?" she cried.

"She's taken Heidi away!"

"Who? Where? Where?" But evidently a sus-

picion of the truth had flashed upon her, for only a little while before Brigida had casually remarked that she had seen Dete going up toward the Alm. Without waiting for Peter's answer, the old woman, weeping and trembling with haste, groped her way to the window, and flinging it open, cried out:

"Dete! Dete! Don't take the child away! Don't take her away!"

Dete heard the imploring voice distinctly enough, but she only hastened on all the faster.

"Grannv is calling me," exclaimed Heidi, struggling to free her hand from her aunt's firm grasp. "I want to—I *must* go to her, Aunt Dete."

But Dete would not yield.

"You can't go to her now, Heidi. You can see her when you get back from Frankfort—and then you can bring her some nice present. Wouldn't you like that?"

This suggestion acted like magic, and Heidi offered no further resistance.

"What shall I bring her?" she asked.

"Something very, very nice. Let me see—well, for instance, they have the most delicious soft white rolls in Frankfort. She'd like to have some of them, I think, because she can't eat that hard black bread any more."

Heidi was delighted.

"That's true!" she cried. "She always gives her black bread to Peter and says that it's too hard for her to eat. Oh, let's hurry, Aunt Dete! Perhaps we can get back from Frankfort to-night with the rolls!" And

now she hurried along so quickly that Dete, who was carrying the bundle, could hardly keep up with her.

In a short time they had reached Dorfli, where Dete, anxious to evade the curiosity of the villagers, discouraged the questions of those who tried to stop her by saying as she hurried past them:

"Can't you see that we are in a hurry? I can't waste time in talking!"

"Is she taking the child away from the Alm-Uncle now, do you suppose?"

"It's a wonder the little one is still alive!"

"A wonder indeed! And she's ruddy and strong into the bargain!"

Such were the comments that reached Dete's ears, and she was glad when she had put Dorfli and its inquisitive inhabitants behind her.

From that day on, whenever the Alm-Uncle appeared in Dorfli, the villagers noticed that his face was more fierce and sullen than ever; and as he strode along its little street on his way to Mayenfeld, carrying his cheeses on his back, and his thick staff in his hand, his dark eyes gleamed so threateningly that the mothers warned their children to keep well out of his path.

It was a merciful thing, they said, that the child had been taken away from him, and, misunderstanding Heidi's eager haste, they thought that she had wanted to leave him. But the old blind grandmother took the Alm-Uncle's part, and whenever anyone brought her flax to spin for them, she told how kind and gentle the old man had been to the child, and how he had mended her

cottage for her when it was in danger of falling down upon them all. These reports were, of course, carried back to the village, but no one believed them, and the villagers said merely that Granny was old and blind, and must have been dreaming even to think of such things.

CHAPTER SIX

A NEW CHAPTER CONCERNING NEW THINGS

In the library of the Sesemanns' large house in Frankfort, the little invalid, Clara, was lying in her rolling chair, with her mild blue eyes fixed on the stolid face of the grandfather's clock. Its ponderous ticking seemed to retard rather than hasten the passage of the long and tedious hours, and to-day the little girl, usually so patient, was almost fretful.

"Isn't it time *yet,* Miss Rottenmeier?" she asked at last, unable to repress her impatience.

The lady whom she addressed was an impressive-looking person, whose air of rigid dignity was enhanced by the peculiar uniform that she wore; consisting of a short cape, and a tall, stiff cap that added a full twelve inches to her naturally imposing stature. Since the death of Clara's mother, many years before, Miss Rottenmeier had been in charge of the Sesemann household, and Mr. Sesemann, who was rarely at home, had given her full authority over his domestic affairs with the one condition that his little daughter's wishes were always to be consulted, and never, under any circumstances, gainsaid.

Perhaps she had not heard Clara's question, for the child was repeating it for the second time just as Dete arrived at the front door with Heidi, and was inquiring of the coachman, Johann, whether it were possible to see Miss Rottenmeier at so late an hour.

"That," replied Johann, in a surly tone, "ain't my affair. Ring for Sebastian—he's in the hall."

Dete promptly rang the bell, whereupon the door was opened by the butler, Sebastian,—a magnificent creature in livery, whose eyes were as large and round as the shiny buttons on his uniform.

"I would like to know if I can see Miss Rottenmeier," Dete repeated, but the butler merely stared at her coldly.

"I have nothing to do with that," said he. "You must ring the other bell for the maid, Tinette," and without offering any further information, he disappeared.

Dete rang the bell that he had deigned to indicate, and after a time the maid answered the summons, apparently in no very good humor.

"Well," she demanded tartly, "what is it?"

Dete repeated her inquiry for the third time, whereupon Tinette turned without a word, and left her still standing outside the door. After a time, however, the sour-faced little woman returned with the message that Miss Rottenmeier would receive Dete and the child; and signified that they should follow her upstairs.

In the doorway of the library Dete stopped and waited respectfully to be bidden to enter, still holding tightly to Heidi's hand, for she did not know what her niece might be impelled to do or say under the stimulus of these new and strange surroundings.

Miss Rottenmeier rose, and came toward them, bending a sharp gaze on the prospective companion of the daughter of the house; while Heidi, quite oblivious to

the doubtful expression that came into the good woman's face as she observed the child's shabby appearance, looked up at her, impressed and awed by the lofty headdress.

"What is your name?" the lady inquired after her long scrutiny.

"Heidi."

"Heidi? What kind of a name is that? Surely it isn't your Christian name?"

"I don't know what else it can be," said Heidi, simply.

"That is not a proper answer," said Miss Rottenmeier severely, and turning haughtily to Dete, she demanded, "Does the child mean to be impertinent?"

"With the lady's permission, I will speak for the child," Dete said hastily, giving Heidi a little push for her impolite answer. "It is not that she is impertinent, but that she did not understand the gracious lady. It is the first time that she has been in such a fine house, and her manners are rough—but she is a good child, and obedient as the lady may be assured. Her name is Adelheid—after her mother, who was my only sister."

"Well, that is a name that one can understand," said Miss Rottenmeier with great dignity. "But now it seems to me that she is rather small for her years—you understand, of course, that Miss Clara's companion was to be a child of her own age so that she could take part in her studies and other occupations? Miss Clara is twelve years old—what is the age of this child?"

"With the lady's permission," replied Dete glibly, "I cannot say for certain. She is in fact somewhat

younger than I thought but I believe she is about ten years old."

"I am eight years old, Aunt Dete," Heidi volunteered. "Grandfather told me so."

But this helpful piece of information did not seem to please Dete, who promptly administered a smart pinch to check Heidi's tongue.

"What!" cried Miss Rottenmeier, flushing with indignation. "Why, that is too young by four whole years! What can you have been thinking of, my good woman? Well—tell me what you have learnt, and what books you have studied, Adelheid?"

"None," said Heidi.

"*None!*" Miss Rottenmeier was aghast. "Do you mean to say that you don't know how to read?"

"No, I can't read, and neither can Peter."

"Merciful Heavens! You can't read! What *have* you learned?"

"Nothing," Heidi truthfully replied.

There was an ominous pause, during which Miss Rottenmeier attempted to understand how any human being could exist in such an appalling state of ignorance. Then she turned a freezing gaze upon Dete.

"Young woman, all this is absolutely contrary to our understanding," she said, crushingly. "How dared you presume upon me in this way?"

Dete, however, was not easily intimidated.

"With the lady's permission—I thought that this child would suit. She may be younger than the lady expected her to be, but older children are often spoiled

and disobedient. Now I must hurry away, for my mistress is waiting for me. If the lady will permit, I will come again, and see how the child gets along." So saying, she dropped a courtesy, and turning, went quickly from the room. After a moment, during which the bewildered and outraged governess tried to collect her thoughts, Miss Rottenmeier hurried after her, but the artful young woman had already disappeared.

Up to this time Clara had said nothing, but from her wheeled chair silently and steadily regarded Heidi, who stood without moving near the door. As soon as Miss Rottenmeier had left the room, however, she beckoned to the child to come near to her.

"Which do you like best to be called?" she asked, as Heidi ran to her side, "Heidi or Adelheid?"

"My name is Heidi and nothing else," was the reply.

"Then that is what I shall always call you," said the little invalid. "I like it very much. I never heard it before, and I never saw anyone like you. Was your hair always short and curly like that?"

"Yes, I think so," said Heidi.

"Are you glad to have come to Frankfort?"

"No. But I am going home again to-morrow, and I shall bring Granny some lovely little white rolls."

"You are a queer child," said Clara, in her quaint, grown-up way. "Don't you know that you have been brought here to live with me? We shall have our lessons together. They are very dull now, and I'm glad you can't read, because it will be something new. You see, my tutor, Mr. Candidate, comes every morning at

ten o'clock, and lessons go on until two—and sometimes I think that the morning will *never* end. Often I see him hold his book up to his face—as if he were near-sighted, you know—but he is really *yawning;* and every now and then, Miss Rottenmeier puts her handkerchief up to *her* face, pretending that something we've been reading has made her cry—but she is only yawning, too. But if *I* yawn, she says that I'm not well and must take some cod-liver oil, which is perfectly horrid stuff! Now, though, it won't be nearly so dull, because I can listen sometimes while you are reading."

Heidi, however, shook her head doubtfully, feeling not at all elated or hopeful at this prospect.

"But Heidi, you *must* learn to read," said Clara seriously. "Everyone must. At first, of course, you won't understand, but Mr. Candidate is very nice and patient, and will explain everything to you, and then, after a little while, you'll enjoy it."

At this moment Miss Rottenmeier reappeared, in great agitation and a very bad humor. She had entirely failed to waylay the elusive Dete. From the library she darted into the dining-room, where Sebastian was setting the table in a somewhat leisurely fashion, and sharply commanded him to serve supper without an instant's delay. Then she summoned Tinette and ordered the spare-room to be put in order.

Sebastian, offended by the tone in which Miss Rottenmeier had addressed him, vented his indignation by opening the folding-doors of the dining-room as noisily as possible. Then he stalked solemnly over to the

wheel-chair to roll Clara in to her place at the table. Heidi, meanwhile, had fastened her black eyes on his magnificent figure, and was regarding him so intently that at length he inquired, more or less impolitely, but under his breath, so that Miss Rottenmeier should not hear, what there might be about him that she found so peculiar.

"You look like Peter," said Heidi. This remark, uttered in her natural tones, constituted a shocking breach of decorum; and Miss Rottenmeier, horrified once again, sharply informed her that her manners would have to change, and bade her take her place at the table immediately.

The dull, formal meal began; but Heidi had already made an exciting discovery; for, on the snowy napkin beside her plate, was a lovely soft white roll! She said nothing, until Sebastian bent down to offer her some fish; then, inspired with the confidence in him that his resemblance to Peter had given her, she pointed to the roll, and asked in a low voice:

"Can I have that?"

Sebastian, hardly able to conceal a broad grin, threw a wary side glance at Miss Rottenmeier, then nodded quickly. Instantly, Heidi had seized the roll, and tucked it away in her pocket. The butler gulped—to have laughed would have been an unpardonable crime—then, blank and immovable as before, he continued to offer Heidi the fish at which she had not yet so much as glanced. The little girl, not understanding that, by the laws of etiquette, he had to stand there without

speaking until she had served herself, looked up at him questioningly.

"Do I have to eat that?" she inquired at length, pointing to the fish. Sebastian nodded.

"Then give it to me," she said quietly, and continued to sit, serenely gazing at her plate.

Sebastian's face worked, and presently the platter began to tremble in his hand.

"You may leave the dish on the table!" ordered Miss Rottenmeier, glaring at him. "I will call when I want you!"

The luckless butler hastily left the room, and Miss Rottenmeier turned to Heidi with an expression of stern and desperate decision.

"I see that there are certain things, Adelheid," she said in crisp and frosty tones, "which you must be made to understand immediately!"

And forthwith she began the recital of all the household rules and regulations which, henceforth, the little barbarian would have to observe on pain of severe punishment.

"You are to understand that you are never to converse with Sebastian at the table. You are to speak to him only when it is absolutely necessary. You are never to address any of the servants familiarly. Likewise, when you address me, you are always to say 'Miss Rottenmeier.' As to how you address Clara, I leave it to her to choose."

"She is to call me just 'Clara,' of course," put in the little invalid.

Miss Rottenmeier inclined her head proudly, then, drawing a fresh breath, began upon the second chapter of the laws. There was, apparently, no end to them. There were rules for everything, it seemed; for going to bed at night, and for getting up in the morning, for going out and for coming in, for opening doors, and for shutting windows—the mere recital of them was a feat beyond the powers of anyone but a Miss Rottenmeier, and how any mere human being could observe all of them every day was something that hardly lay within the range of possibility.

But the monotonous sound of Miss Rottenmeier's voice had long since faded from Heidi's consciousness. Her eyes drooped, then opened, then drooped again, her curly head nodded, and at last, leaning against the back of her tall, stiff chair, she slumbered peacefully.

"And now, Adelheid," Miss Rottenmeier wound up in the course of time, "I trust that you have perfectly understood me, and will remember and observe all that I have said."

There was no reply.

"She has been sound asleep for ever so long," remarked Clara. Her eyes were twinkling—not for many a day had there been so entertaining a meal in the Sesemann household.

Miss Rottenmeier's faded cheeks flushed a dull pink.

"She is—outrageous!" she exclaimed, wrathfully. "What can one do with such a child!" and she rang the bell so violently that both Sebastian and Tinette came rushing in response to the furious summons. But

Heidi, worn out by her long journey, slept tranquilly through the disturbance, and in spite of all the efforts to waken her, could hardly be roused sufficiently to be led off to bed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISS ROTTENMEIER HAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE DAY

Heidi, accustomed as she was to be up with the sun, awoke early the next morning; and puzzled by the unfamiliarity of her surroundings, lay, turning her head this way and that on her pillow, trying to think how she came to be lying in this large, dim room, and in a huge white bed, bigger than any she had ever seen in her life.

The heavy curtains that were drawn across the windows shut out the morning light, but she could see that the room was luxuriously furnished, that there was a deep sofa, covered with chintz on one side, and a dressing table fitted out with all manner of toilet articles on the other, and several stands on which were vases filled with flowers. And all at once, Heidi remembered that she was in Frankfort.

She sprang from the bed, and ran to the window—she must see the blue sky, and the earth, and feel the fresh spring air against her face; but the thick curtains shut these things away from her, and she felt like a bird in a gilded cage.

Her little arms were not strong enough to lift the heavy sash, but she pushed back the long hangings, and scrambling onto a chair, peered longingly out. But alas! Wherever she looked she saw only walls and windows and windows and walls.

A dreadful feeling came over her. Would she never see the green grass and breathe the clear sweet air again? Perhaps, if she could get out of the house!—but just at that moment there came a brisk knock at the door, and then Tinette's sour face peered in at her.

"Breakfast is ready!" announced the maid, and promptly disappeared. Her disagreeable expression had hardly conveyed the idea that the announcement was an invitation, and Heidi did not understand that she was meant to go down to the dining-room. Not knowing what was expected of her, and fearful lest she should break some rule, she sat down quietly on a little chair in one corner, and waited for further developments. These arrived presently, in the form of Miss Rottenmeier herself.

"Whatever are you doing, Adelheid?" demanded the lady, irritably. "How long are you going to keep breakfast waiting? Come down immediately!"

Without replying, Heidi followed her to the dining-room, where Clara, who was already at the table, greeted her with a bright, friendly smile.

The meal proceeded without any disturbances, and when it was over Heidi was bidden to go with Clara to the library and there await the arrival of the tutor, who was due at ten o'clock.

When the two children were alone, Heidi pointed to the window, and asked Clara:

"How can you see the ground?"

"Why, you open the window and look out," answered Clara, laughing.

"But the windows won't open."

"Oh yes, they will—maybe you are too small, and I can't help you, but if you ask Sebastian he'll open them for you."

This assurance greatly relieved Heidi's oppressed spirits. Gradually, she began to talk to Clara quite cheerfully, and in reply to the little cripple's eager questions, told her little by little about her beloved mountains, and the pastures, and about Peter and Granny and the goats.

Meanwhile, the tutor—or "Mr. Candidate" as he was usually called—had arrived; but Miss Rottenmeier, overwhelmed with her new problem, was detaining him in the dining-room, whither she had taken him to hear a full account of her anxieties.

The good woman's difficulty was this: some time before, she had written to Mr. Sesemann, who was in Paris, telling him of Clara's wish for a companion of her own age, and expressing to him her own favorable opinion of the idea. In point of fact, Miss Rottenmeier had her own reasons for being more than willing to gratify her young charge's desire, for she often found it very irksome to be in constant attendance on a sick child; and she was delighted when Mr. Sesemann had given his full consent to the plan. But he had added very distinctly that his daughter's companion was to be as far advanced in every way as Clara herself, for he wanted "no whining child around his house." And then the poor woman burst forth with the tale of the gross deception that had been practised upon her, enu-

merating to the judicious Mr. Candidate all of Heidi's shortcomings—her total lack of education, her utter ignorance of the first rules of civilized behavior, and a thousand other faults and failings which made it out of the question to keep the child. But Mr. Candidate, who was not given to hasty judgments, persuaded the distraught governess to wait a little and let the problem adjust itself; and having delivered himself of a soothing discourse on the excellence of patience, he rose and went off to the library to begin the lesson.

To Miss Rottenmeier, the study-hour was always a horror of monotony and boredom, so she stayed where she was, and turned her thoughts to the problem of how the servants were to address the little barbarian, who, in accordance with Mr. Sesemann's orders, was to be regarded as a member of his own family. But a moment later, her reflections upon this delicate point of etiquette were shattered by a violent crash, followed by shouts for Sebastian. She rushed to the library, from which the shouts were issuing—then stood aghast before the sight that met her eyes. The table was overturned in the middle of the floor, and from the midst of the scattered books trickled a stream of ink that was slowly making its way across the room. Heidi was nowhere to be seen.

"Heavens above! What has happened?" cried Miss Rottenmeier, wringing her hands. "Books! Tablecloth! Work-basket! Everything covered with ink! Ah—I know—it's that dreadful child *again!*"

The tutor was gazing speechlessly at the ruins, and

could offer no explanation, but Clara, who was secretly getting great enjoyment from this novel state of affairs, said:

"Yes—it *was* Heidi, but she didn't mean to, and she must not be punished, Miss Rottenmeier. She heard some wagons rolling by, and was in such a hurry to see what was happening out in the street that she caught the table-cloth and pulled everything off. I don't know what can have excited her so much."

"There, Mr. Candidate!" cried Miss Rottenmeier, turning to the tutor, "you see that it is just as I said! That child hasn't the first idea ——" Then, without waiting to finish her sentence, she rushed from the room in search of the culprit.

In the lower hall, Heidi was standing at the open door, looking up and down the street in bewilderment.

"What are you doing? What is the matter with you? How dare you run away from your lessons like this?" demanded Miss Rottenmeier, breathlessly.

"I heard pine-trees rustling," said Heidi. "But I can't see them anywhere, and now I can't hear them any more."

"Pine-trees! What are you talking about? Do you think that you are in a forest? Come upstairs at once and see the mischief you have done!"

Heidi followed the irate governess to the library again, where the full effects of the disaster were still on view. Until that moment she had had no idea of the damage she had wrought in her eagerness to find out

where the mysterious roaring of the pine-trees had come from.

"Never," said Miss Rottenmeier, pointing to the floor with a dramatic finger, "never let this happen again! During lessons you are to sit absolutely still, and pay attention to your teacher. If you cannot do this, I shall have to tie you in your chair. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Heidi, meekly. "And you won't have to tie me, Miss Rottenmeier. I will sit still."

But lessons were out of the question for the rest of the day, and the tutor took his departure, leaving Tinette and Sebastian to clean up the ink, and put the library in order.

In the early afternoon, Clara always had to rest for two hours, and Heidi had been given to understand that at this time she was free to amuse herself.

Needless to say, the poor child had been looking forward to this short period of comparative freedom with pathetic eagerness, and she had already made her plans as to how she would employ it. But she needed help.

Accordingly, when luncheon was over, she stationed herself in the corridor adjoining the dining-room, so that she should not miss the individual in whose good will she had placed her hopes.

After some time, she heard Sebastian's step on the kitchen stairs, and presently he appeared, carrying the large silver tea-tray to lock it away in the dining-room cupboard. As he reached the last step, Heidi ap-

proached him, and with an air of confidence told him that she had something to ask him. But Sebastian's temper had been ruffled by the trouble he had had to clean the ink from the library carpet, and he looked at her coldly.

"What might it be, Ma'amselle?"

"Oh, nothing *wrong*," Heidi assured him. "But why do you call me 'Ma'amselle'? My name is 'Heidi.'"

"I have to call you Ma'amselle. Miss Rottenmeier wishes it."

"Does she? Well, then I suppose you must," said Heidi resignedly; and with a little sigh, she added: "Now I have three names."

At this, Sebastian laughed in spite of himself, and Heidi, who had never seen a glimmer of merriment on his wooden face, looked up with new hope brightening her own.

"Well, well," said Sebastian, when he had put his silver away, "what do you want me to do for you?"

"How can a person get a window open, Sebastian?"

"Get a window open? Why, just like this, to be sure," and he flung up the dining-room window. "Is that what you wanted?"

But the frame was so high, that even stretching up on tiptoe, Heidi could not see over it.

"Let's see how this is, then," said Sebastian, good-naturedly, drawing up a carved wooden bench for her to stand on. "Now can you look out and see what is below you?"

But after a moment or two, poor Heidi, who had

climbed up on the bench so eagerly, looked around at him, with blank disappointment written on her face.

"There's nothing but a stony street down there," she said, woefully. "If I should go round behind all those houses, Sebastian, what would there be on the other side?"

"The same thing. More houses."

"But where," said Heidi, desperately, "where can I go so that I can see all over—everywhere?"

"You'd have to get up in a high tower, I guess—like that golden church steeple yonder," said Sebastian, pointing. "You'd get a pretty fine view from there, I should say."

Instantly Heidi had sprung down from her perch, and before Sebastian's slow wits had grasped an inkling of her intention, she had darted from the room, down the stairs and out into the street.

But unfortunately it was no such easy matter to get to the church tower as it had seemed from the high window, and from below, in the crowded thoroughfare, it was no longer even visible. Heidi looked about her, gazing up anxiously into the faces of the passers-by in the hope of discovering some friendly soul from whom she might get some information and help. But everyone seemed to be in such a hurry that she was afraid to approach any of them.

Presently, however, she spied a young organ-grinder, standing on the curb, with his hand-organ on his back, and a strange little animal huddling in his arms. Heidi ran up to him, and breathlessly asked:

"Please, can you tell me—where is the church with the golden steeple?"

"Don't know," was the reply.

"Well, who can tell me where to find it?"

"Don't know."

"Do you know where there is another church with a high steeple?"

"Sure I do."

"Then will you please come with me and show me where it is," begged Heidi, tugging at his arm.

"First show *me* what you'll give me," said the boy, and he extended a grimy palm. Heidi felt through her pockets, and after a long and difficult search produced a picture card decorated with a wreath of red roses. Clara had given it to her just that morning, and she was loath to part with it. But—to look out over a broad valley again! To see the green swelling hills! Ruefully, she laid the little picture in the outstretched paw.

"There," said she, "will you take that?"

The boy withdrew his hand, scornfully.

"What do you want then?" asked Heidi, gladly putting the picture back in her pocket.

"Money, of course!"

"I haven't got any, but Clara has, and she will give me some. How much do you want?"

"Twenty cents."

"All right. Come on."

The boy, apparently satisfied to give his services on credit, started down the street. Heidi trotted along

beside him happily, and by the time she had acquired the information that the object he carried on his back was a hand-organ, which gave forth enchanting music when he turned the handle—they had reached the steps of an ancient church.

Heidi looked up at the towering steeple, then at the doors, which were closed and bolted.

"But how do I get in?" she inquired.

"Don't know," returned her guide, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Do you suppose, if I rang, someone would answer the bell, like Sebastian?"

"Don't know."

But Heidi had already discovered the bell, embedded in the masonry, and now tugged at it with all her might.

"You must wait here for me," she announced, "because I don't know how to find the way back home."

"What'll you give me?"

"What do you want?"

"Another twenty cents."

"All right," said Heidi.

At that moment the doors were unbolted from within, then, creaking on their rusty hinges, they swung apart a little, revealing the figure of an old man dressed in a long black gown. Plainly, he was in no very hospitable frame of mind, and after regarding the two visitors with a fiercely inquiring eye, he demanded, shrilly:

"What do you mean by ringing the bell like that? Can't you read the notice there?" and he pointed to a

placard that was nailed over the bell. "Have the goodness to observe that it says, 'To Be Rung Only by Those Who Desire to Ascend the Steeple.'"

"But I *do* want to go up in the steeple," said Heidi.

The sacristan gave her a sharp glance.

"Has someone sent you? Have you business in the steeple?"

"No," replied Heidi. "I just wanted to see the view."

"Be off with you!" was the indignant reply. "And take care that you don't play a joke like this twice, young lady!"

With this, he was about to shut the door upon her, when Heidi caught him by the sleeve, and in an imploring voice cried:

"Oh, please—*please!* Just this once!"

Her black eyes were so full of tearful earnestness, that the old man melted in spite of himself.

"Well, well," said he in another tone, and taking her hand gently, "if you are so set upon it as all that, come along then."

The young organ-grinder sat down on the steps to wait until Heidi returned, for his curiosity to see the view from the steeple was not so intense that he would take a weary climb to gratify it.

Clinging to the sacristan's hand, Heidi then began to ascend the narrow winding staircase of the tower: up, up, higher and still higher, until at last they reached the very top.

"Well, here you are now," said her companion.

He lifted her in his arms so that she could look out of the little window, and for several minutes Heidi gazed down upon the roofs and chimneys of the great city, which from the spire of the church looked like a sort of toyland. Then with a sigh of bitter disappointment, she slid down from the old man's arms.

"It isn't what I thought I'd see," she said hopelessly. "It isn't what I wanted."

"What on earth could the child have been thinking of?" muttered the sacristan. "Well, that's the only thing there is to see, so come along now, and don't be ringing at my bell again."

He led the way down the dark stairway with Heidi following, until the steps widened out into a landing before a low door that led into a little attic room. Here stood a basket, in front of which lay a large grey cat, whose sonorous purring attracted Heidi's attention. It was, in fact, a most gigantic cat, for the old tower was infested with mice, and the cat was able to catch at least half a dozen a day without any trouble at all, on which substantial fare she had thriven beyond the fortune of other cats. Heidi stared at the big, indolent animal in perfect amazement.

"Come over here," said the old man, seeing her profound interest. "The little ones are in this basket."

Heidi rushed to his side; then clasped her hands in an ecstasy of delight, for in the straw some seven or eight furry little kittens sprawled, clawing and scratching each other with their tiny feeble paws.

"Oh, the dear, *dear* little things!" shrieked Heidi, quite beside herself with rapture. "The *pretty* little kittens!"

"Would you like to take one of them home with you?" asked the sacristan, smiling.

"For me? To *keep?*" Heidi could not believe that the world offered such bliss to anyone.

"Certainly. You can have as many as you like—you can have all of them if you've room for them." As a matter of fact, he was more than willing to be rid of his swarm of young cats without having to hurt them. But Heidi was dumb with joy. Why, in the Sesemanns' big house there was room, it seemed to her, for all the kittens in the world—and how amazed and charmed Clara would be to see a whole basketful of such enchanting little creatures! But the question was, how should she take them with her? She attempted to lift two of them in her arms, but as she did so the mother cat sprang up snarling so fiercely that she drew back in fright.

"I'll bring them to you if you'll tell me where you live," the sacristan offered as he soothed the angry animal.

"I live at the Sesemanns'," said Heidi eagerly. "It's a big house with a golden dog's head on the door."

He knew the house very well, it seemed, and again assured her that he himself would bring the kittens to her. But even so, Heidi could not tear herself away from the entrancing little animals.

"Well, let's see if we can steal two of them away now,"

said the old man, and so saying he lifted the big cat in his arms, carried her into the attic room, and shut the door upon her. Then, in a flutter of joy, Heidi selected one white kitten and one tawny one, and stowed them away in the pockets of her pinafore. After this, the sacristan managed to coax her down the tower stairs to the door of the church where the young organ-grinder was waiting for her.

"Now," said Heidi, as he rose lazily from the step, "which way do we go to the Sesemanns' house?"

"Don't know."

"Don't know!" echoed Heidi, aghast. "Why, you've *got* to know!" and she began to describe the great house from pointed roof to cellar door, until as her very breath was failing her, a beam of intelligence glimmered on her guide's blank face.

"Come on," he said briefly, and without more ado set off at a run, Heidi and her pocketful of kittens scampering along beside him. In a very few moments he had actually brought her to her destination.

"So there you are!" exclaimed Sebastian, as he opened the door for her. "In with you quick, Ma'amselle—Miss Rottenmeier looks like a loaded cannon—ready to go off 'Bang!' in a moment! What ever made you go running off without a word to anyone?"

Heidi entered the dining-room and took her place at the table in the midst of an ominous silence. Clara did not speak; Miss Rottenmeier did not so much as raise her eyes. The meal proceeded for several minutes without a word being uttered; then at length Miss Rotten-

meier pursed her lips, assumed an expression of forbidding gravity and began:

"Adelheid, I shall have more to say to you later on." A pause. "But for the present"—another pause—"I wish you—to distinctly—UNDERSTAND—that you have been a VERY bad girl. To run away from the house—without permission—without a word to anyone—and to return at *this hour*—is a piece of naughtiness—that deserves—SEVERE punishment!"

"Meow!" was the reply to this outburst.

Miss Rottenmeier's sallow face flushed crimson with anger.

"What do you *mean* by such impudence, Adelheid!" she cried. "What——"

"But I——" Heidi began. "Meow! Meow!"

"That is ENOUGH!" said Miss Rottenmeier, almost choking. "Leave the room *instantly!*"

Heidi stood up obediently, but frightened, and still trying to offer an explanation.

"Indeed, Miss Rottenmeier, I meant——" "Meow! Meow! Meow!!"

"But Heidi," cried Clara, in distress, "when you see how angry you have made Miss Rottenmeier why do you keep on saying 'Meow'?"

"But it's not me—it's the kittens," said Heidi, and with that she calmly brought forth her two treasures. If she had flung a bomb on the table she could not have produced a more startling effect.

"Eh? What!! KITTENS!!" shrieked Miss Rottenmeier, leaping up from her chair. "Sebastian! Ti-

nette!! Take these horrible animals away! Instantly!" To the poor woman there was nothing on earth more terrifying and repulsive than a cat, and she rushed into the library bolting the door behind her as if she were being pursued by demons.

Sebastian was trying to control his mirth behind the dining-room screen, and at length managed to get himself into a condition to reappear and obey the commands of the panic-stricken governess. But in the dining-room he found that perfect peace reigned once more; Clara sat cuddling one of the kittens in her lap, while Heidi knelt beside her playing with the other one.

"Sebastian, you must help us," said Clara. "You must put these kittens in some place where Miss Rottenmeier won't find them. They terrify her and she will have them sent away. But I want awfully to keep them, so do hide them for us."

Nothing appealed more strongly to Sebastian's fancy than a chance to deceive the household tyrant, so he readily promised to make a fine bed for the kittens and to put them "where the lady won't lay eyes on 'em."

After a long interval, the library door was timidly opened, and through the crack, Miss Rottenmeier called from her refuge:

"Have those dreadful animals been taken away?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Sebastian respectfully, and with that he deftly lifted the kittens from Clara's lap and disappeared.

Miss Rottenmeier was too much exhausted by the gamut of emotion through which she had just passed to

do more than order both children to bed immediately. But although the remainder of the scolding which Heidi had incurred was yet to come, the sacristan's kittens were safely established in the Sesemann household.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEW DISTURBANCES AT THE SESEMANNS'

SEBASTIAN had just ushered Mr. Candidate into the library the next morning when the door-bell rang a second time with such violence that, thinking the master himself must have returned unexpectedly from Paris, he rushed down the stairs again with breakneck haste. But, upon opening the door he encountered, instead of the impressive figure of Mr. Sesemann, a ragged young lad with a hand-organ on his back.

"What do you mean, you young rascal?" sputtered Sebastian, in a rage. "*I'll* teach you to ring the bell like that! What d'you want?"

"I want to see Clara," was the answer.

"You scrubby little grasshopper! Don't you know enough to say '*Miss* Clara'? And what might you be wanting of Miss Clara, pray?"

"She owes me forty cents," said the boy, coolly.

"You're crazy. And how do you know that a Miss Clara lives here?"

"Yesterday I took her where she wanted to go, and that was twenty cents, and then I brought her here, and that was another twenty cents."

"Well! That just shows what a rogue you are!" cried Sebastian. "Miss Clara never goes out, because she can't walk. So take yourself off before I give you a sound thrashing!"

But the boy did not move.

"I tell you, I saw her on the street yesterday," he insisted. "She has short black hair, and black eyes, and her dress was brown, and she talks different from us."

"Oho!" Sebastian began to chuckle. "That was the little Ma'amselle—up to something new. Well, step inside here, and wait in the hall until I come back. And —er—if you'd like to try a tune or two on that organ of yours, why I'm sure the young ladies would enjoy it."

Then, in quite a good humor he went up to the library on his errand.

"There's a lad downstairs who wishes to speak to Miss Clara herself," he announced, and Clara, only too glad of an interruption, asked the tutor's permission to have the boy brought up at once.

As usual, during the dull lesson hour, Miss Rottenmeier was sitting in the dining-room, her bony fingers occupied with her needlework, while her thoughts strayed serenely over their usual range of household topics. But suddenly she sat up with a jerk of wonder.

From somewhere—from the street, of course—there drifted to her ears the merry, vacant tones of a hand-organ. Yet they sounded curiously near at hand—indeed, one might even fancy that they came from the library!

Miss Rottenmeier rose abruptly, and going to the door of the other room, flung it open. For a moment she could not credit the evidence of her own eyes; it was unbelievable—*unthinkable*—that with the dignified

tutor looking on helpless and speechless, and Heidi and Clara listening with beaming faces, a little ragamuffin of an organ-grinder was standing in the middle of the room, grinding away at his hand-organ with all his might.

"Stop!" screamed Miss Rottenmeier, when she had found her voice. "Stop *immediately!* This instant! At once!" But her words were drowned by the shrill, cheery music.

She made a rush toward the boy—then something moved directly between her feet. She glanced down; and there, stirring clumsily on the floor, she beheld a large, sluggish turtle! With a wild leap, such as one would not have supposed she had been nimble enough to execute these twenty years, Miss Rottenmeier swept her skirts around her, and shrieked at the top of her voice for Sebastian. This time her piercing cries rose above the jovial tones of the hand-organ, and the boy stopped playing.

"Take these——! Put them out! Send them away!" gasped poor Miss Rottenmeier, collapsing into the nearest chair as Sebastian made his appearance; and accordingly, Sebastian, with as much gravity as he could summon—for the lady's discomfiture afforded him infinite delight—bade the boy take his music box and his turtle, and forthwith led him away. But before he put the youngster out into the street again, he slipped some coins into his grubby paw.

"Forty for yesterday, and forty for playing," he said, with a grin. "That was well done."

Meanwhile, quiet had been restored in the library, and the lessons were begun again while Miss Rottenmeier sat by, determined to prevent any more harrowing experiences, and grimly meditating upon a suitable punishment for the culprit. Thus, the morning studies had proceeded for some time, when Sebastian again appeared at the door, carrying a large covered basket.

"Someone left this for Miss Clara," he announced.

"For me?" echoed Clara in surprise. "Oh, please let me see what it is!"

"I think, Clara," interposed Miss Rottenmeier, in a severe tone, "that it can wait until lessons are over."

Clara yielded obediently; but her curiosity increased moment by moment, until, unable to control it any longer, she burst out in the middle of a declension:

"Oh, please, Mr. Candidate, won't you let me have just one peep? Then I'll go right back to lessons, and be ever so good!"

"Well," began the harassed tutor doubtfully, "I suppose if you don't, you'll be thinking of nothing else——" but before he could finish, the lid of the basket lifted, apparently of its own accord, and a moment later a perfect swarm of kittens descended over the edge and began to scamper over the floor. They leaped over Mr. Candidate's boots; they nipped the legs of his trousers, they clawed at Miss Rottenmeier's skirts, they scratched playfully at her slippers; they sprang into Clara's lap, and capered and clawed and mewed. Heidi, squealing with delight, darted about trying to catch them in every corner, and Clara kept crying, "Oh,

the cunning pets! The darling little creatures!" But the unhappy tutor stood dazedly lifting first one foot and then the other, vainly trying to keep them out of the reach of his small tormentors. As for Miss Rottenmeier, she was simply paralyzed with horror. It was useless for her to seek safety by standing up on her chair, for the lively little animals would only spring joyfully up after her; so she sat in frozen misery, wailing for Sebastian and Tinette.

Once more the two servants came rushing to the rescue, and after a good deal of lively scrambling the kittens were collected and carried out of the room. Lessons began again. But Miss Rottenmeier was putting together the evidence she had gathered that pointed to the probable author of all these dreadful events, and biding the hour when she should pronounce sentence upon the culprit. Accordingly, when lessons were over, she summoned Sebastian, and in the course of a sharp cross-examination of the simple fellow, discovered what Heidi had done on her tour of exploration the day before. Then she dismissed him, and calling Heidi to her, began in an awful voice:

"Adelheid, I know of only one punishment that can bring such a child as you to a proper state of repentance. Now we shall see whether a dark cellar, full of rats and mice, will teach you to be a better girl!"

This terrible prospect did not seem to disturb Heidi particularly, for she knew nothing about rats and mice, and the Alm-Uncle's dark cellar where he had kept his

milk and cheese had always seemed to her a very pleasant place indeed. But Clara was horrified.

"No, no, Miss Rottenmeier!" she shrieked, almost weeping. "You *mustn't!* Wait until Papa comes home! Then you can tell him what Heidi has done, and he will do what he thinks best. But you mustn't punish her now! You mustn't!"

Miss Rottenmeier, of course, had no choice but to yield to the wishes of the little invalid; so, finding what gratification she could in the thought that the master of the house was due to return very shortly, she merely said, in an icy voice:

"Very well, Clara. But I shall certainly have something to say to Mr. Sesemann!" And with this, she marched out of the room.

The next few days went by easily enough, but Miss Rottenmeier's ill-humor did not dissipate, and her resentment against Heidi increased rather than lessened. It seemed to her that since the child's coming—and an outrageous deception had been practised on her in the first place—the whole machinery of the household had been thrown out of gear, and could not be restored to its former regularity.

But, for Clara, life had taken on a gayer aspect than she had ever known. She was never bored now, for even during their lessons, Heidi was amusing. At the present time, the poor child was struggling with the alphabet. In his neat, precise handwriting, Mr. Candidate would make the letters for her to copy, while she watched him intently; then, in the midst of his earnest

directions as to how she should hold her pen, she would notice some odd little tail or curly-cue, and pointing to the interesting phenomenon, would cry out gleefully, "It's a goat!" or "It's an eagle!" In fact, the tutor's handwriting seemed to awaken in her every kind of idea except that of the alphabet.

When lessons were over, she would sit beside Clara, and talk about her old life on the Alm, until longing and bitter homesickness overcame her, and she would sob out, "Oh, to-morrow I *must* go home! I must—I must go to-morrow!"

Clara soothed her as best she could, telling her to wait until Mr. Sesemann came home, and that he would see what could be done, and Heidi took what comfort she could from the thought that with every day she stayed in Frankfort the little heap of rolls for Granny grew so much the bigger.

Every afternoon, when luncheon was over, she spent her two hours of freedom in the solitude of her own room. She understood now that in Frankfort one was not permitted to run out-of-doors as she had been free to do in the happy days on the Alm, and she tried to be as obedient as possible to the iron-bound rules of her new life. Nor was she allowed to chat with the friendly Sebastian, since that, too, was against the law, and as for any conversation with the chronically sour Tinette, the mere idea of such a diversion never entered Heidi's head.

So the poor child was left to pass her lonely hours brooding upon her memories of the Alm, picturing its

green slopes and the wild flowers and the warm golden sunlight, and again, the mountains and the pine-trees all sheathed in their winter armor of glittering snow, until her yearning for her grandfather and her old life became intolerable. She remembered that Dete had promised that she could go home whenever she wanted, and now at last, Heidi felt that she could not bear one day longer this separation from all the things she loved.

The next afternoon, therefore, when she was alone, she calmly packed her long-hoarded rolls in the old red shawl, put her battered straw hat on her head, and hurried quietly downstairs. But just as she reached the entrance who should appear, alas! but Miss Rottenmeier herself, who was just returning from a walk.

For a moment the astonished governess merely stood still and looked at Heidi from head to foot. Then, the inevitable:

"What does this mean?" burst out. "Have I not forbidden you to leave this house without permission and go roaming around the street like a ragamuffin? Can you explain this disobedience?"

"But I wasn't going to roam around, Miss Rottenmeier," answered Heidi in a fright. "I am only going home."

"What!" Miss Rottenmeier could not believe her own ears. "Going *home!* You want to go home! You are running away!" she cried, clasping her hands together. "Ah—when Mr. Sesemann hears of *this!* Running away from *his* house! Ungrateful child, have you ever

in your life known such surroundings, such fare, such attention as you have been given here?"

"No," said Heidi.

"'No!' You may well say No!" cried the outraged lady. "And shame, shame upon you for your wicked ingratitude!"

Poor Heidi could bear no more.

"But I must—I must go home," she sobbed. "Granny is waiting for me, and Snowhopper will be crying because I am not there, and if I don't give Peter my bread and cheese he will beat Thistlefinch! Here one never sees how the sun says good-night to the mountains, and —and if the eagle should fly over Frankfort he would scream louder than ever because here people make each other unhappy and won't go up to the tops of the mountains where one is glad!"

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Miss Rottenmeier. "The child is out of her right senses! Come up to your room at once, and let me hear no more of this!"

She hurried on up the stairs, colliding with Sebastian in her agitated flight, but Heidi did not move. When the good-natured butler approached her, the child's black eyes were flaming, and her whole body quivering with indignation.

"Come—what's happened now?" asked Sebastian cheerfully. But Heidi could not speak.

"There—you mustn't take it so to heart, whatever it is," he said, patting her shoulder gently. "Don't you let her scare you, little Ma'amselle. Come upstairs now like a good girl, and don't be down-hearted."

Mechanically, Heidi started up the stairs, but so slowly, so dejectedly that Sebastian's warm heart was filled with pity for her.

"Don't you be sad, Ma'amselle," he coaxed. "Up to now you've been real brave—I haven't seen you cry once! I'll tell you what!—When the lady is out of the way, we'll go and have a look at the kittens. Eh? They're a lively, interesting lot—scampering around all over the place!"

But Heidi's only assent to his suggestion was a cheerless little nod, and without a word she went into her room and closed the door.

At supper that night, Miss Rottenmeier was silent, and, filled now with a genuine suspicion that Heidi was not altogether in her right mind, kept looking oddly and furtively at the child as if every moment she was expecting to see her do something alarming or extraordinary. But Heidi, when she had put away the roll for Granny in her pocket, sat as quiet as a mouse, eating nothing, drinking nothing, and saying nothing.

The next morning, Miss Rottenmeier confided her suspicion to Mr. Candidate, but, although that gentleman admitted that so far Heidi had not even learned the A B C's, he did not share Miss Rottenmeier's opinion. The child, he said, might perhaps be called eccentric, but he believed that in time, with the proper treatment, a great improvement could be effected.

Somewhat calmed by his view of the problem, Miss Rottenmeier allowed him to go off to the library, while she herself turned to her domestic duties.

Now, it so happened that—Heidi being badly in need of clothing—Clara had just given her a good many of her own dresses, and Miss Rottenmeier, who was particularly anxious to have Mr. Sesemann see how completely the child's needs were provided for, went up to Heidi's room to inspect her wardrobe, and to see that it was properly equipped and in perfect order.

A few moments later, she came flying down to the library, holding a bundle out in front of her at arm's length and wearing an expression of rage, disgust and despair.

"What is this that I have found now, Adelheid!" she cried. "In your wardrobe—in a place for dresses, Adelheid! What do I find? A pile of *stale bread!* Bread, I say, Clara! In her wardrobe! Tinette! See that all this stale bread is thrown away immediately and also the old straw hat on Miss Adelheid's table!"

"No! No! Not my hat!" shrieked Heidi, springing up. "And the bread is for Granny, Miss Rottenmeier! You must not throw it away!" And she would have thrown herself in front of Tinette, but that Miss Rottenmeier held her back.

"Stay here, Adelheid! That trash shall be put where it belongs!"

Then Heidi flung herself down beside Clara's chair, weeping as if her heart would break. Miss Rottenmeier turned on her heel and left the room.

"The rolls were for Granny!" sobbed Heidi. "Now I can't bring them to her."

"Heidi, listen!" begged Clara. "Don't cry so. You

can take all the rolls you want to Granny—twice as many as you had, and they'll be fresh and soft. The bread you had had gotten too stale to eat anyway. So don't—*don't* cry!"

But Heidi was not easily consoled.

"You *promise* that I can have just as many as I had saved?"

"Many, many more, Heidi—I promise."

At last Heidi dried her eyes; but her face was still red and tear-stained when she came to supper, and when she saw her roll lying at her plate, it took all her strength to choke down the sobs.

Meanwhile, Sebastian was trying to convey some information to her by means of various peculiar signs and gestures. He made faces, pointed first to her head and then to his own, and finally winked his eyes mysteriously as if to say:

"Don't worry. I've taken care of things."

But not until Heidi was going to bed did she discover the meaning of these queer gesticulations.

The kind fellow had heard Heidi's heart-broken weeping, and having learned from Tinette the cause of her new sorrow, had slyly watched to find out where the maid carried the stale rolls and the old straw hat for the trashman to take away. The rolls were not really worth rescuing, but the beloved and battered hat he had spirited away from the rubbish heap, to Heidi's room, where, most artfully, he had concealed it under the counterpane of the bed.

Thus it was that, just as the disconsolate Heidi was

creeping under the covers to cry herself to sleep, she found the precious headgear once more in her possession. In the joy of this discovery, the loss of the rolls was forgotten. She hugged the old hat in her arms, then, scrambling out of bed, wrapped it up carefully in a big handkerchief and thrust it back into the most secret corner of her wardrobe.

CHAPTER NINE

MR. SESEMANN HEARS OF STRANGE DOINGS

Mr. Sesemann had come home at last. The whole household, of course, was in a state of great excitement, and Sebastian and Tinette were busy carrying upstairs the innumerable boxes and bundles that the master of the house had brought back with him; for on his trips Mr. Sesemann always collected a great many beautiful and curious things.

His first desire was to see Clara, and they greeted each other tenderly, for father and daughter had a very deep and strong affection for each other. Heidi had retreated shyly to a corner, but after a moment Mr. Sesemann turned to her, and holding out his hand, said kindly:

"So this is the little Swiss girl! Come and shake hands with me, my child—that's right. And now tell me how you two are getting along together? No quarrelling and scolding, eh?"

"Oh, no—Clara is always good to me," answered Heidi.

"And Heidi never quarrels," said Clara.

"Well, well, that's good to hear." Mr. Sesemann stood up, looking well pleased. "Now, then, you must let me go and get a bite to eat, for I've had nothing today! And afterwards you shall see what I've brought you." And he went away to the dining-room, where

Sebastian had set out some luncheon for him. Here, Miss Rottenmeier was waiting, eager for an opportunity to air all her long-standing grievances; but Mr. Sesemann greeted her cheerfully, and seated himself at the table, without appearing to notice her grim and portentous expression.

But, at length, when he had taken the edge off his appetite, he turned to her.

"Well, Miss Rottenmeier, what is the trouble?" he asked. "You seem preoccupied. Is anything wrong? Clara appears to be quite happy."

"Mr. Sesemann," the lady announced, solemnly, "we have been outrageously deceived!"

"How, may I ask?" inquired Mr. Sesemann, calmly sipping his wine.

"In regard to this child—Clara's companion. Realizing to the full your anxiety that Clara should have as an associate only a good and noble child, I had thought that a Swiss girl, simple and unspoiled, would answer your requirements. For I had always read that these people, nourished in the pure atmosphere of the mountains, went through life without touching the earth, so to speak."

"Well, I imagine that even Swiss children touch the earth once in a while," remarked Mr. Sesemann, smiling. "Otherwise they would have no need of feet, and would grow wings!"

"Mr. Sesemann, I hope you understand me," said Miss Rottenmeier, offended by this pleasantry. "I mean, that I had hoped that a child, reared upon those

lofty heights, would come amongst us bringing with her a certain—er—a certain ——"

"But, my dear Miss Rottenmeier, I had hardly expected that you would find a seraph for Clara to play with!"

"Pray, Mr. Sesemann," said Miss Rottenmeier with great dignity, "this is not a matter for jest. I have been dreadfully, outrageously deceived!"

"Then please tell me exactly what you mean, Miss Rottenmeier," urged Mr. Sesemann, becoming somewhat concerned. "There seemed to me to be nothing wrong about the child."

"But if you only knew what she has been doing! What manner of people—what *animals* she has brought into your house during your absence!"

"Animals! What on earth do you mean, Miss Rottenmeier?"

"Mr. Candidate will bear me witness, Mr. Sesemann," went on Miss Rottenmeier, too agitated to heed his question. "I assure you that all I can make of the matter is that this child is not in her right senses!"

"Not in her right senses!" By this time Mr. Sesemann was utterly bewildered, but before he could pursue his inquiries any further, there was a knock at the door, and Mr. Candidate was admitted.

"Ah, here is the very man we wanted," said Mr. Sesemann, rising to greet the tutor cordially. "Sit down! Sit down! Miss Rottenmeier, Mr. Candidate will have a cup of coffee with me. And now, Mr. Candidate, I want you to tell me frankly what your opinion

is of this child that has been brought here to be my daughter's companion. What is all this I hear about her bringing animals into the house, and not being quite in her right senses?"

Before he replied to these questions, the punctilious Mr. Candidate had first to express his pleasure at Mr. Sesemann's return, with elaborate inquiries as to his journey, his health and so on, until Mr. Sesemann cut him short rather abruptly, and brought him back to the main question. Mr. Candidate then assumed an expression of profound gravity, and began:

"If I should express my personal opinion concerning the character and general abilities of this child, Mr. Sesemann, I should desire first of all to bring to your consideration the fact that, whether due on the one hand to some imperfection in her mental development, which through a more or less careless upbringing, or, as one might better say, through a somewhat belated education, and again owing perhaps to—though I would not have this understood in any derogatory sense, since unquestionably such an environment has many excellent features—nevertheless the isolation of mountain life, though it has without doubt, as I say ——"

"My dear Mr. Candidate," interrupted Mr. Sesemann, "you put yourself to too much trouble! I merely wanted to know whether the child has inconvenienced you, too, by introducing some *animals* into this house, and also what you think of her as a companion for my daughter?"

Mr. Candidate then drew a long breath and launched

forth upon another perfectly incomprehensible harangue, which Mr. Sesemann, who could extract no information from it whatever, finally cut short.

"There, Mr. Candidate—don't disturb yourself. I must hurry to see my daughter," and with this, Mr. Sesemann hastily left the room.

He found the two children in the library as he had left them, and seating himself by Clara's side, turned kindly to Heidi.

"My child, will you run and bring me—wait a moment—bring me a——" For a moment he could not invent an errand on which to send her while he spoke privately to Clara; then he finished, "Bring me a glass of water."

"Fresh water?"

"Fresh water," said Mr. Sesemann, and Heidi darted away.

"Now, my dear little daughter," said Mr. Sesemann, taking Clara's hand in his, "can you tell me what kind of animals this little playmate of yours has brought into the house, and what earthly reason Miss Rottenmeier can have for thinking seriously that she is not in her right mind?"

Clara *could* tell him, and when he had heard about the kittens and the turtle that had frightened Miss Rottenmeier so badly, and the little organ-grinder, he threw back his head, and laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Well, well—do you want me to send her away, my dear?" he asked finally. "Are you tired of her?"

"Oh, no, no, Papa!" cried Clara. "*Don't* send her away. Ever since she has been here *everything* has been so much more fun. And then she tells me about so many interesting things, that now the days seem too short!"

"Ah, that is good!" exclaimed Mr. Sesemann, looking at her tenderly. "Well, here comes your little friend back again with my water. Is it nice and fresh, my child?"

"Yes. Fresh from the well," Heidi replied.

"You didn't go to the *well* for it, Heidi?" said Clara, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes—but I had to go quite far, and that is why it took me so long. There were so many people at the first one, and then I went up the street to another well, and there were ever so many people waiting there too, so I had to find another one. And I met a white-haired gentleman who asked to be remembered to Mr. Sesemann."

"That was quite an expedition!" said Mr. Sesemann, laughing heartily. "And who was the gentleman?"

"He came up to me at the well, and said, would I give him a drink from my glass. And then he asked me who had sent me for the water, and I said, 'Mr. Sesemann.' And then he told me to remember him to Mr. Sesemann, and that he hoped you would enjoy your water."

"But can you tell me what he looked like?"

"He smiled very kindly, and he had a big gold chain, with some sort of gold thing with a red stone in it, hang-

ing from it. And there was a horse's head on his walking stick——"

"It's the doctor!" exclaimed Clara and Mr. Sesemann in one breath, and both of them laughed at the novel coincidence of Heidi's meeting with Mr. Sesemann's old friend.

That evening Miss Rottenmeier was informed that Heidi would not be sent away. Mr. Sesemann found that she was not only quite in her right senses, but very original and intelligent as well, and that he wished her to be treated as if she were his own child.

"Her oddities are not to be looked upon as naughtiness, Miss Rottenmeier," he added. "And if you find her a little difficult to understand, you will soon have assistance, for my mother is coming to stay here very soon, and, as you know, she is a very wise woman."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Sesemann," Miss Rottenmeier answered stiffly, but she was not at all pleased at the prospect of Mrs. Sesemann's visit.

At the end of two weeks, Mr. Sesemann had to make ready for another business trip to Paris. But he consoled his little daughter with the promise that her grandmother would be with her in a very few days.

He had, in fact, hardly taken his departure, when a letter arrived from Mrs. Sesemann, from Holstein, where she lived on her own estate, telling her granddaughter to expect to see her sometime during the following day. Clara was overjoyed at this news, and talked so much to Heidi about "Grandmamma," that Heidi began to speak of the old lady as "Grand-

mamma," too. This, of course, greatly offended Miss Rottenmeier's sense of propriety, and later, when Heidi was going to her room, she called the child to her, and laid down another law.

"Adelheid, you are not to address Mrs. Sesemann as 'Grandmamma.' You are to say 'gracious lady'—do you understand?"

Poor Heidi did not understand at all; but Miss Rottenmeier gave her such a crushing look that she did not dare to ask for an explanation. Yet it seemed to her that all these extraordinary rules for addressing different people made life very complicated indeed.

CHAPTER TEN

GRANDMAMMA

From the lively preparations that began the following day, one could readily guess that Mrs. Sesemann, whose arrival was expected hourly, was a lady who commanded the respect of the entire household. Tinette appeared in a spotless cap and apron, and looking almost amiable; Sebastian rushed about collecting foot-stools and placing them in front of every chair, so that no matter where Mrs. Sesemann should choose to sit down, she should have a place upon which to rest her feet; and Miss Rottenmeier supervised and inspected every detail of the household management with a punctiliousness born of her great desire to demonstrate to Mrs. Sesemann that her abilities as a housekeeper could not suffer by comparison with anyone's.

Late in the evening the sound of carriage wheels brought Sebastian and Tinette hurrying to the front door, while Miss Rottenmeier followed with a slow and dignified step to receive Mrs. Sesemann.

Heidi had been told that the old lady would first want to see Clara alone, and that she must not go downstairs until she was sent for. Obedient to this command the child sat patiently in a corner of her bedroom, repeating over and over again the strange form of address which she had been ordered strictly to observe. After some time Tinette's head appeared around the half-opened door.

"You are to go to the library!" snapped the maid.

Heidi trotted down the stairs, her mind still occupied with the importance of addressing Mrs. Sesemann in the proper terms. But, as she opened the door of the library, a fresh, friendly voice called to her:

"Ah, here is the child! Come and let me have a good look at you!"

Heidi walked over to Mrs. Sesemann's chair, and said clearly:

"How do you do, Lady Gracious?"

For a moment, Mrs. Sesemann stared at her in surprise; then she began to laugh.

"Is that what they say in the Alps, my dear?"

"Oh, no," replied Heidi, "we don't say that."

"Well, neither do we," said the old lady, gaily, patting Heidi's cheek as she spoke. "But no matter. You must call me 'Grandmamma' as Clara does. Can you remember that?"

"Oh, yes," said Heidi, greatly relieved, "because that is what I always called you before."

"Did you, indeed? Well, that's right," and Grandmamma laughed again, so warmly and kindly and merrily that Heidi loved her at once. And she was indeed the most lovable and delightful grandmamma imaginable, with crisp, glistening white hair, and a lace-frilled cap, from which hung two broad ribbons that were always fluttering as if a gay little breeze hovered around her head.

"And now, tell me *your* name, my child?" she said, taking Heidi's hand in her own.

"My name is just Heidi—but if I am called Adelheid I pay attention."

"Mrs. Sesemann will agree that the child cannot be called by an outlandish nickname," said Miss Rottenmeier, who had just entered the room, "but one by which it is proper for the servants to address her."

"My dear Rottenmeier, if she is accustomed to being called 'Heidi' I, myself, can see no reason why she should *not* be called so."

Miss Rottenmeier was, secretly, much vexed at the old lady's way of addressing *her;* but she certainly could not say anything about that, for Mrs. Sesemann had her own peculiar habits, and people always accepted them without a word. Moreover, she was a very keen and alert old lady indeed, and had guessed how matters stood in her son's household five minutes after she had entered it.

The next day after luncheon, when Clara was resting, she went to Miss Rottenmeier's room and knocked at the door.

"I wanted to ask you what the child, Heidi, does at this time?" she asked, disregarding the governess' obvious surprise at her unexpected visit.

"She sits in her room, Mrs. Sesemann, where, if she had the slightest inclination to do anything useful, she could occupy herself very profitably. But I find that she is absolutely lacking in any such inclination, and merely invents such absurd things to do as one can hardly mention in well-conducted society!"

"Well, I'm sure that if I were left alone like that

I should be inspired to do things that aren't permitted in well-conducted society!" exclaimed Mrs. Sesemann. "Will you bring her to my room, please? I want to show her some books that I have brought with me."

"But I assure you, the child knows nothing about books whatever!" cried Miss Rottenmeier. "It is the very thing that I complain of. In the whole time that she has been here, she has not even learned her A B C's. Mr. Candidate can tell you that it is impossible to teach her anything, and, indeed, if that excellent man did not have the patience of an angel he would have given her up long ago!"

"That is odd," commented Mrs. Sesemann, thoughtfully. "She doesn't look like a dull child. But at any rate, bring her to me now—at least she can look at the pictures in my book." And although Miss Rottenmeier would have liked to say a great deal more, she turned away and walked quickly to her own room.

The report that she had just heard of Heidi's stupidity puzzled her, and she determined to investigate the truth of it for herself, without consulting the worthy Mr. Candidate; for, while she always treated him with her usual friendliness and courtesy, she avoided anything like a conversation with the long-winded gentleman, whose discourses bored her unspeakably.

When, a few minutes later, Heidi made her appearance, the old lady greeted her affectionately, and making her sit down in a little chair beside her own, began

to show her the fine, colored pictures in the book that she had brought.

Heidi looked on, enraptured, as Mrs. Sesemann turned the pages one by one. Then, suddenly, she gave a cry. For a moment she sat looking at the beautiful reproduction with glowing eyes; then the great tears began to roll down her cheeks, and covering her face with her hands, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"My child, what is the matter?" cried the old lady in astonishment, not knowing what chord the picture had touched in the child's heart that called forth such a burst of sorrow; for it showed only a tranquil country scene, bathed in the golden light of the sinking sun, where, in the midst of rolling meadows, a shepherd was tending his flock.

Then she took Heidi's hand gently.

"Come, my dear little girl—don't cry. I see that the picture has reminded you of something that is painful to remember, but see—here is a lovely story that goes with it, and I am going to read it to you to-night. And there are many other delightful tales and legends in these books that one can read, and tell to other people. But now I want to have a little talk with you, so dry the tears, and let me see your face. There—let's be happy again."

But it was several minutes before Heidi could swallow her sobs, and Mrs. Sesemann let her weep until she had eased a little her bitter longing and homesickness. When at last the child was quieter, Grandmamma said kindly:

"Now, Heidi, tell me how the lessons are going with Mr. Candidate. Are you learning to read and write?"

"Oh, no," answered Heidi with a deep sigh. "But then, it is impossible."

"What do you mean? What is impossible?"

"To read. It's too hard."

"Wherever did you get that idea?" exclaimed Mrs. Sesemann.

"Peter told me, and he knows because he has tried to learn to read for ever so long. He says it's impossible."

"Well," said Grandmamma, after a pause, "I don't know Peter, but let me tell you this, Heidi—we must not let other people's failures discourage us. Each one of us must find out what she can do for herself. The reason that you haven't learned to read is because you have listened to that foolish Peter. Now I want you to listen to *me!* I say that you *can* learn to read, just as other children have learned, and in a very short time too. And when you are able to, you shall have this book with the picture of the shepherd all for yourself, and you will be able to find out for yourself what he did with his sheep and his goats, and all sorts of lovely and interesting things. Now doesn't that make you want to learn to read, Heidi?"

Heidi had listened attentively to Mrs. Sesemann's words, and her eyes had brightened a little.

"Oh, yes—I *would* like to," she replied, earnestly.

"Then you will—and that very quickly. Now let us go and see Clara. Bring the book with you, and we'll

show her the beautiful pictures." And so saying, Grandmamma rose briskly, and taking Heidi's hand led her to the library.

Yet Mrs. Sesemann's sympathy and kindness, although it brought great comfort to the lonely little girl, did not lift the heaviest burden that lay upon her heart. Ever since the day that Miss Rottenmeier had scolded her so severely for her attempt to run away, charging her with ingratitude to Mr. Sesemann and telling her how angry he would be if he should hear of it, a great change had come over the child. She understood at last that her aunt had deceived her, and that she not only was not to be allowed to go back to her grandfather whenever she wished as Dete had promised, but that on the contrary she would have to live in Frankfort for a long, long time—perhaps forever. And she felt now that it was wrong of her even to want to go home, and that if she should speak of it even Clara and the kind Grandmamma would be angry with her. And so her secret yearning grew heavier every day; she could hardly eat, and her cheeks grew paler and thinner; at night she often lay awake for hours, while the household was wrapped in slumber, and her aching homesickness called up in her imagination the hut on the Alm, and the sunshine and the flowers so vividly that she seemed to see the very reality before her eyes. When sleep finally came, her dreams brought her back to her old life—once more she saw the mountain peaks flaming in the fires of the sunset,—the falcon's nest,—the great snow fields—Casaplana—then in her joy she would

start up, only to find, alas! that she was in her big bed in Frankfort, far, far from her beloved Alps, whither she would never go again; and burying her face in the pillows, she would sob out her very heart; but softly, so that no one should overhear her, and be angry with her for her ingratitude.

The child's melancholy did not escape Mrs. Sesemann's sharp eyes; but for several days the old lady said nothing; until, one morning Heidi appeared at the breakfast table with her cheeks stained with tears. When breakfast was over, she took Heidi gently by the hand, led her to her own room, and closed the door.

"Now tell me, my child, what is the matter?" she began. "Don't you feel well?"

Heidi raised her black eyes, and looked tragically at the old lady; but the thought that if she should explain her sorrow this kind Grandmamma would be angry with her, made her shake her head sadly.

"I cannot tell you."

"You cannot tell me? Is it something you could tell to Clara, then?"

"Oh, no—I cannot tell anyone," said Heidi, so desolately that Mrs. Sesemann's heart ached for her.

"Well, I will tell you something," said Grandmamma, after a little pause. "I wonder if you have thought of it. You see, Heidi, whenever one has a sorrow that she cannot tell to anyone on earth, she can tell it to the dear God, and ask *Him* to help her. You know that, don't you? Don't you say your prayers at night, thanking God for all the good things He has given you

and asking Him to keep you from wrong-doing and sorrow?"

"No," said Heidi, wonderingly, "I have never done that."

"But have you never learned any prayer, Heidi?"

"The other grandmother taught me one, but long ago, and I have forgotten it."

"Ah, that is why you are so sad, Heidi," said Mrs. Sesemann. "You don't know anyone who can help you. Only think how good it is to know, when one is lonely and unhappy, that at any moment one can turn to the dear God, and ask Him for His aid and comfort. For He *never* refuses us, my child—He can help us in every sorrow, and give us peace."

Heidi's eyes lit up.

"Can I tell Him everything?"

"Everything, Heidi."

Heidi quickly drew her hand from Mrs. Sesemann's.

"May I go now?"

"Of course."

Heidi darted from the room, and running to her own bedchamber, closed the door, and knelt down on a little stool. Then folding her hands, she began to pour out all her grief and homesickness, and to beseech the good God to help her, and let her go back to her grandfather.

It was about a week later that Mr. Candidate sent word to Mrs. Sesemann, formally requesting the honor of a private interview with that lady. Mrs. Sesemann, much as she dreaded the ordeal, granted him the favor.

and, when he presented himself at the door of her sitting-room, spoke to him cordially, and begged him to be seated.

"I am glad to see you, my dear Mr. Candidate. But tell me to what I owe the pleasure of this visit—I hope that nothing is wrong."

"On the contrary, gracious lady," began Mr. Candidate, "matters are going in such a way as I could never have anticipated—as, in fact, no one, who had a glimpse into the old state of affairs—for indeed, one calculates, and justly, upon the first developments—that is to say, in view of the early difficulties, no one could have credited the possibility of such an extraordinary change, or, as one may say, alteration ——"

"Do you mean that Heidi is really learning to read?" interrupted Mrs. Sesemann, with a smile.

This anticipation of the point that he was gradually coming to by his own extremely roundabout process, quite took the tutor's breath away. But he recovered himself, and went on:

"It is indeed extraordinary, gracious lady, on the one hand, that the child, after all my thorough explanation and inexhaustible patience, was, at first, totally incapable of so much as mastering the simple alphabet, and, on the other, that suddenly, and as it were, inexplicably, when I myself was on the point of despair, this same child, almost, so to speak, overnight, became able to read, and that with a correctness such as I have rarely met with in a beginner. And I may say also, gracious lady, if I am permitted to take the liberty, that

I am equally astonished that you should have anticipated the possibility of such a, to me, entirely unforeseen and uncalculable turn of events!"

"Well, when one is as old as I am, my dear Mr. Candidate," laughed Mrs. Sesemann, "one has usually found out that many wonderful things can happen in this life. Your report has given me the greatest pleasure."

She accompanied him to the door, and then hurried to the library to see for herself how Heidi was progressing.

The two children were sitting side by side, and, in very truth Heidi, with a book open on her lap, was reading aloud; slowly perhaps, but distinctly and correctly.

That same night, the little girl found the splendid book with the colored pictures lying on her plate at supper; and as she glanced up in uncertain surprise, Mrs. Sesemann nodded gaily.

"Yes, it is yours now—as I promised, my dear."

"Mine? To keep—even when I go home?" cried Heidi, rosy with joy.

"Certainly—it's yours 'for keeps'; and to-morrow we shall begin to read it together."

"But you mustn't go home for a long time, Heidi," begged Clara. "When Grandmamma goes, I shall be all alone."

The wonderful book now became Heidi's dearest possession; she was never weary of looking at the fine colored pictures, and she could not go to sleep before she had tucked it safely under her pillow. Every eve-

ning she read aloud from it to Clara and Grandmamma, so that in time she knew all the stories perfectly. But the one about the shepherd who tended his flocks in the green meadow remained her favorite, and that one she could repeat almost word for word as it was written in the book; how, at one time the young shepherd had been happy, tending his father's flocks on the hillsides; then how he had gone away among strangers, to live for himself, and how he had found only poverty and suffering, and how, finally, he had gone back to his father to beg for forgiveness. The last picture showed him returning to his father, who, instead of dealing harshly with him, welcomed him with outstretched arms, and restored to him all that he had had before, when his life had been happy and blessed. Heidi did not know then that this was the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son.

There were no more dull dreary hours for her now. She had learned the most valuable lesson in life; for, although her heart still ached with its burden of homesickness, she had found how to console herself in sorrow, and how to be patient, if she could not be happy and cheerful, in her long trial.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HEIDI GAINS AND LOSES

EVERY afternoon, when Clara had gone to rest, and Miss Rottenmeier had betaken herself to her own room, Grandmamma stole in secretly to see her little granddaughter alone for five or ten minutes, and then, leaving her to sleep, called Heidi to spend the ensuing two hours with her.

Sometimes Heidi read aloud to the old lady, and sometimes she sewed; for Mrs. Sesemann had a collection of charming little dolls, and had shown Heidi how to make tiny frocks and undergarments for them, so that almost without realizing it, the child had learned to cut and hem neatly. Then, while she stitched away on the pretty bits of material which Grandmamma provided, the old lady talked to her about all sorts of interesting things.

But, although the days were no longer forlorn and solitary for the little girl, and although she took pleasure in her new interests and occupations, there was still a wistful sadness in her black eyes that did not escape Mrs. Sesemann.

The time was drawing near when the old lady would have to end her visit, and, anxious to understand the cause of the child's melancholy before she left her, she sent for Heidi, to have a last talk with her.

When the little girl entered the room, carrying her beloved book under her arm, Mrs. Sesemann beckoned

to her to come nearer, and gently taking the book away, laid her hand kindly on Heidi's shoulder.

"Now, tell me, my dear," she began, in her sympathetic voice, "why is it that you are not happy? Have you the same sorrow in your heart?"

Heidi nodded.

"Have you asked the good God to help you?"

"Yes," answered Heidi.

"Do you pray to Him every day to give you His blessing, and send you happiness?"

"Oh, no—I don't pray any more," Heidi replied, sadly.

"What are you telling me, Heidi? Why don't you pray any more?"

"It's no use. God didn't hear me, and I know, of course, that He couldn't. Because, if so many people pray to Him every day, He can't pay attention to them all, and certainly He didn't hear me."

"And why are you so sure of that, Heidi?"

"Because I prayed to Him every day for a whole week, and He did nothing."

"Heidi, Heidi—you must not feel that way, my child," said Grandmamma, shaking her head. "The good God is the loving Father of us all, and He knows what is best for us far, far better than we know ourselves. If we wish for something that He knows is not good for us, He will not grant our harmful wish; but,—if we do not lose faith in Him, and continue to pray earnestly and trustfully, He will give us instead something that is much better for us. If He did not grant

your prayer it was because your wish was not really good for you at the present time. Do not fancy that He did not *hear* your prayer—He sees and hears and knows all things because He is *God* and not a human being. And because He knows what is best for you, He thinks to Himself, 'Yes, I shall grant Heidi's prayer, but only in its proper time, and when it will bring her most happiness. For if I grant it now, and she finds, later, that it would have been better if I had not let her have her way when she wanted it, she will be sorry.' Heidi, He sees us all, my dear—those who trust in Him, and turn to Him in their sorrow, and those who forsake Him. And if one of us no longer trusts in Him, that one He suffers to follow his own blind, stubborn will; and sorrow and loneliness will be his lot, and no man will pity him, for he forsook the loving God who would have helped him. Will you do that, Heidi—or, will you go to Him, and give Him back your trust and ask His pardon for having turned away from Him?"

Every word that Mrs. Sesemann had uttered sank deep into Heidi's heart, and when she had finished, the child looked at her with dark, serious eyes.

"I will ask God's pardon now," she said, simply, "and I will never again forget Him."

"Then," said Grandmamma, "you may be sure that He will help you, and console you in His own good time."

Heidi instantly ran to her own room, and, kneeling down, prayed earnestly for God's forgiveness, promising Him that she would never lose her trust in Him again.

The days slipped by, bringing, at last, the time for Mrs. Sesemann's departure. Mrs. Sesemann tried to divert the children's thoughts, and to make the occasion as lively as possible, but when the carriage had driven Grandmamma away the house seemed strangely empty and still, and Clara and Heidi sat in forlorn silence, not knowing what to do with themselves.

At length, Heidi got her book, and at Clara's request, began to read aloud. The story quickly absorbed her thoughts, for her vivid imagination endowed the scenes and characters with extraordinary reality, so that, for her, everything she read was as real as the events of her own life.

Unfortunately, the tale to which she had turned happened to describe the death of an old grandmother; and instantly, she pictured her beloved Granny on the Alm. A terrible conviction seized her that it was Granny who was dying, and, suddenly dropping the book, she burst into a fit of wild, uncontrollable sobbing.

"Oh, Granny is dead! Now she is dead! And I shall never see her again! I shall never be able to give her the little white rolls!"

At first, Clara could not understand the meaning of this strange outburst, but when the cause of Heidi's sorrow began to dawn on her, she tried to explain that there was no connection between the grandmother in the story and the grandmother in the Alps. But Heidi was not to be comforted. She was certain that during her absence, not only Granny had died, but the grandfather also, and that when after a long time she should

go back to the Alm, she would find the hut deserted and all those whom she had loved dead and gone.

While Clara was vainly trying to explain away these groundless fears, Miss Rottenmeier entered the room. She listened for a moment, then losing patience, said sternly:

"Adelheid, that is enough of your senseless crying! If you let me find you again acting in this absurd way over the stories, I shall take the book away from you for good!"

At this terrible threat, Heidi turned white, and hastily began to wipe the tears from her cheeks. In a moment or two she had choked down her sobs, and not another sound of crying escaped her; but she could not drive the dreadful thoughts from her mind, and her face was contracted with the effort to keep Miss Rottenmeier from seeing any outward sign of her grief.

She could no longer force herself to eat, and every day grew thinner and paler. In vain did Sebastian, who felt a genuine concern for the child, try to coax her appetite.

"Come, try just a spoonful, Ma'amselle," the kind-hearted fellow would whisper. "This is excellent."

But Heidi could not swallow a mouthful. At night, the sad thoughts flocked to her brain, and she cried, often for hours, smothering her tears in her pillow, until she had wept herself into an exhausted sleep.

Thus the weeks slipped by. She hardly knew whether it was summer or winter, for the windows of the Sesemanns' house looked out only upon the steep walls and

blank windows of other houses, with never a glimpse of grass or trees. Now and then, when Clara was feeling stronger, they took short drives, but the little invalid tired quickly, and they never were able to go beyond the limits of the city. Heidi's yearning for her mountains and her fir-trees grew so intense that the least word or sight would awaken in her the memory of them that made it almost impossible for her to control herself.

When autumn and winter had passed, and the sun began to shine more warmly on the unfriendly walls of the city houses, she knew that it was the time when Peter would again be driving his goats up to the pastures; and the mountain slopes would soon be covered with the harebells and golden rock-roses, blowing in the spring wind.

Then her homesickness was more than she could endure; and creeping off to the solitude of her own room, she would turn her face to the wall to shut out the very sight of the spring sunshine, and with her hands over her eyes, struggled against her incurable longing for the Alm.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE SESEMANNS' HOUSE IS HAUNTED

For several days Miss Rottenmeier had been going about the house on her various duties with a peculiar air of uneasiness; and if, after dusk she had occasion to go from one room to another down the long dark corridor, she would often glance uncertainly over her shoulder as if she fancied that someone might come up quietly behind her, and pluck her dress. She seemed unwilling to be alone in any but the most occupied rooms, and, if she had to go upstairs into any of the fine guest chambers, or downstairs into the great, empty ballroom where every footstep reëchoed from the walls, and the ancient portraits stared down at her from their massive frames, she always used one pretext or another to have Tinette accompany her. Tinette it seemed was also affected by the same peculiar timidity. If *she* had to go into any of the unfrequented parts of the house, she called Sebastian,—in case, she said, she might need him to help her lift or carry something. And Sebastian did not like to go into any of the out-of-the-way rooms unless *he* had Johann, the second footman, with him. And downstairs in the kitchen, the old cook, who had been in the household for years, shook her head solemnly, and muttered to herself over her pots and kettles: "To think that I should have lived to see such goings-on!"

That something really very strange and weird was

afoot in the Sesemanns' house, there could be no doubt. Every morning when the servants came downstairs, the front door was found standing wide open; and try as they might they could not account for this extraordinary occurrence. The first time that it happened, their natural conjecture was that burglars had broken in during the night; but a careful search of all the rooms revealed the fact that nothing whatever was missing.

It made no difference that now, at night, the front door was not only double-locked and bolted, but reinforced by a stout oaken bench as well. In the morning it was as wide open as ever.

At length, on the pressing and tearful entreaties of Miss Rottenmeier, Sebastian and Johann plucked up their courage, and were persuaded to sit up all night to see what happened; and Miss Rottenmeier rummaged out a marvellous array of ancestral weapons with which the bold footmen were to arm themselves, and even provided them with a bottle of wine to reinforce their courage.

The following night the two heroes were at their post, and began to prepare themselves to face the dangers ahead by paying a great deal of attention to their bottle. But the most immediate effect that the wine had on them was simply to make them, first, very talkative, and then very sleepy, and in a short while, both were snoring in their chairs.

The clock in a neighboring belfry, striking midnight, at length roused Sebastian from his slumbers; and pulling himself together, he attempted to awaken Johann.

But this proved to be no easy task. Johann's only response to the vigorous shaking was merely to let his head loll onto the other shoulder, and to sleep yet more sweetly than before.

For a little while Sebastian sat still; but then the unbroken silence began to get on his nerves, and soon he resumed with redoubled energy his efforts to waken Johann. By the time the clock was striking one o'clock, the slumbering hero was aroused; and anxious to prove his vigilance and his splendid bravery, sprang up, exclaiming in a bold and businesslike tone:

"Now, Sebastian! Let's have a look round! Don't you lose courage, man—just stay close to me!" and so saying, he cautiously opened the door of the room a little way, and peered out. Instantly a gust of air extinguished the candle that he held aloft!

The poor man, white as a sheet, started backwards, and seizing Sebastian by the arm, slammed the door and locked it.

"What was it? Did you see something?" stammered Sebastian, hardly able to speak. He had no idea what the matter was, but Johann's fright was visible in his pale face and chattering teeth, and his terror was infectious.

"The front door is open again! And I saw a *white form* standing on the front steps—then it vanished!"

Both of them now concluded that they had probed the mystery quite far enough for the present, and hastily locking the front door, ran upstairs as fast as their legs would carry them, to make their report to Miss

Rottenmeier, who had not been able even to think of going to sleep.

No sooner had the two footmen described the appalling apparition that they had just seen, than she sat down, and with a trembling pen wrote to Mr. Sesemann, describing the terrifying things that were taking place, and imploring him to return immediately.

Mr. Sesemann's reply to this epistle was brief. It was quite impossible to leave his business affairs just then, and he hoped that in a short time Miss Rottenmeier would have discovered the, no doubt, very simple cause for the occurrences that she described; but if the matter still troubled her, he suggested that she write to his mother, and ask her to come and help her get rid of the ghosts. He ventured to say that Mrs. Sesemann would probably make short work of them.

This reply, seeming, as it did, to treat the matter with too little earnestness, offended Miss Rottenmeier.

She wrote to Mrs. Sesemann.

Mrs. Sesemann wrote back that she hardly thought it necessary to make a journey from Holstein to Frankfort because Miss Rottenmeier had seen a ghost; that she herself had never encountered any ghost in her son's house, and that she took the liberty of suggesting that it might be no more than an ordinary human being with whom Miss Rottenmeier could come to a very satisfactory understanding. If not, the best thing to do would be to summon the night watchman.

Poor Miss Rottenmeier had reached the last pitch of desperation. Hitherto, she had not mentioned the

"ghost" to either of the children, fearing that they would get nervous and excited; but upon the receipt of Mrs. Sesemann's unsympathetic letter, she rose, marched grimly to the library where Clara and Heidi were sitting together, and in a low, mysterious voice related to them the whole tale of the uncanny happenings that had taken place during the last few days.

Instantly Clara shrieked out that she would not be left alone a minute, that Papa must come home at once, that Miss Rottenmeier must sleep in her room with her. She declared that Heidi was not to be left alone either —all three of them must sleep in the same room with a night light burning, and Tinette must camp in the adjoining room, and Sebastian and Johann must sit on guard in the corridor. Miss Rottenmeier, of course, promised to write to Mr. Sesemann telling him that *Clara* wished him to come home at once; and she agreed to have her bed put in Clara's room; but for all three of them to sleep there was impossible. If Adelheid were afraid, then Tinette could have a cot in *her* room. But Heidi, who had no idea of what a ghost was, was infinitely more afraid of Tinette; and said that she would rather sleep alone.

Miss Rottenmeier then sat down to compose a second letter to Mr. Sesemann—this time full of information that would turn his skepticism to concern. The unnatural occurrences that she had previously described still persisted (she wrote), and the nervous strain under which they were forced to live had so affected the delicate constitution of his daughter that she, Miss Rotten-

meier, refused to be responsible for the consequences,—and she hinted darkly that Clara's overwrought state of mind could easily lead to epilepsy or St. Vitus' Dance.

This alarming communication had the desired effect. Two days later Mr. Sesemann returned, and immediately rushed to see his darling daughter.

But so far, nothing in Clara's appearance showed that she had begun to go into a decline, as Miss Rottenmeier had hinted. She was so happy to have him home again, that she was quite grateful to the ghost, she said, for having been the cause of his return; and Mr. Sesemann's anxiety relaxed at the sight of her bright face.

"Well, Miss Rottenmeier," said he, turning to the governess with a little twinkle in his eye, "what is this ghost of yours up to now?"

"Indeed, Mr. Sesemann, I can assure you that this is no jesting matter," was the dignified reply. "And I respectfully venture to say that to-morrow morning Mr. Sesemann will not be disposed to laugh! For what has been taking place in this house of late clearly indicates that there have been unseemly happenings here in the past!"

"Come, you mustn't cast any slurs on the behavior of my venerable ancestors, Miss Rottenmeier," said Mr. Sesemann, laughing. "And now, if you will call Sebastian, I think I shall have a little talk with him in the dining-room."

Mr. Sesemann had already formed a theory to account for the "ghost," for he knew very well that there was no love lost between Sebastian and Miss Rottenmeier.

Accordingly, when the footman appeared, he beckoned to him to come near, and said half-confidentially:

"Come now, Sebastian—confess! It's you who have been playing the ghost—to frighten Miss Rottenmeier, eh?"

"Upon my word, sir," exclaimed Sebastian, earnestly, "I never thought of such a thing, and indeed there's that about the whole matter that I don't at all like the looks of!"

"Hum—m——" said Mr. Sesemann, thoughtfully. "Well, then, I suppose I shall have to show you and the valiant Johann what a ghost looks like in broad daylight. Shame on you, Sebastian—a strapping young fellow like you—to run away from a ghost!

"Now, be off with you—go at once to my old friend, Dr. Classen. Give him my compliments, and tell him to come here to-night at nine o'clock sharp—tell him it is important, that I have come all the way from Paris especially to consult him. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. I'll go at once." And Sebastian disappeared.

Punctually at nine o'clock, when the children had gone to bed, the doctor arrived—a merry-looking gentleman, whose cheeks were still rosy, and whose eyes still twinkled under his grey hair.

For a moment he regarded his friend with some anxiety, then he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Well, for one who must have a doctor to sit up with him all night, you look uncommonly healthy, I must

say, Sesemann," he remarked, tapping the other gaily on the shoulder.

"Patience, my friend. You don't understand. The one you must sit up for will prove to be very much less sturdy looking than I, I can assure you—when we have caught him!"

"Then someone *is* sick? And must he be *caught?*" inquired the doctor in astonishment.

"Worse than sick, my dear doctor. We have a ghost! The house is haunted!"

To this, the doctor's reply was a shout of laughter.

"I must say you aren't especially sympathetic," said Mr. Sesemann, smiling too. "It is a pity that Miss Rottenmeier can't hear you—she is unshakeably convinced that a bygone Sesemann is roaming around here bent on some unholy business."

"And how did she happen to make his acquaintance?" asked the doctor, beginning to laugh again.

Mr. Sesemann repeated the accounts that he had received from the various members of his terrified household, and then told his friend that he had decided to sit up that night to find the solution of the mystery. He had had his revolvers loaded, he said, for either the ghost was one of the servants, playing a prank—and in that case, a shot fired into the air would teach him a good lesson,—or it was a thief, in which event a pistol would be a valuable weapon to have on hand.

The two men then went to the room where Johann and Sebastian had kept their watch. It was well-lighted, for Mr. Sesemann saw no reason for waiting in

the semi-darkness for the ghost to appear, and on the table, between the candlesticks, gleamed the barrels of two revolvers. Two bottles of wine had likewise been provided to dispel the tedium of the long watch.

The door was left slightly ajar, so that while the light did not shine out into the corridor, it was possible to hear the least sound. Then having settled themselves comfortably, the two men proceeded to pass the time in cheerful conversation, punctuated now and then with a convivial glass of wine.

Midnight struck.

"Perhaps," remarked the doctor, "the ghost is too clever for us, and won't come to-night."

"Patience. One o'clock is the time it appears, they tell me."

Another hour passed; but the serenity of the night remained unbroken, and neither within nor without was there a sound to be heard.

Suddenly the doctor raised a finger.

"Sh! Did you hear anything then, Sesemann?" he whispered.

Both listened, holding their breath. Then very quietly, yet distinctly audible, came a sound—first, as of someone pushing aside a heavy bench, then of a key being turned twice in a lock, then of a door being opened.

Mr. Sesemann's hand closed over the butt of his revolver.

"You aren't afraid?" asked the doctor, rising.

"It is better to be careful," said Mr. Sesemann. Each

took a candle in one hand, and a revolver in the other, and then stepped softly out into the corridor.

The front door was wide open, and the bright moonlight, streaming in, illumined a white form that stood on the threshold.

"Who is there!" shouted the doctor in a voice of thunder, and both men rushed toward the apparition which turned around, uttering a low cry.

Barefoot, and clad in her little white night-dress, stood Heidi, staring in bewilderment and terror at the bright lights and the gleaming revolvers, and trembling from head to foot, like a leaf in the wind.

The two men looked at each other, astounded.

"Well," said the doctor at last, "this seems to be your little water-carrier, Sesemann."

Mr. Sesemann spoke very gently.

"What are you doing, my child? Why are you here?"

Heidi, pallid with fright, said dully:

"I don't know."

"I think that this matter lies in my field, Sesemann," said the doctor, stepping forward. "Go and wait for me in your sitting-room, and I will take the child back to her bed."

Gently, he led Heidi up the stairs, and when he had reached the door of her room, lifted her in his arms with fatherly tenderness, and carried her to the bed, where he covered her warmly.

"There now—everything is all right, my child," he said soothingly, taking her cold little hand in his big warm one. "Now tell me, where did you want to go?"

"I didn't want to go anywhere," Heidi answered, when her fit of trembling had quieted a little. "I didn't go downstairs myself—I was just there all of a sudden."

"Well, well—and did you have a dream? So that you imagined that you heard or saw something?"

"Oh, yes—I dream every night. Always the same thing. It seems that I am with Grandfather again, and I hear the wind blowing through the fir-trees—and then I think how bright the stars must be in the sky, and I run quickly to the door of the hut and open it—and it is all so beautiful! But then I wake up—and I am still in Frankfort!" Heidi had to fight back the sobs that swelled in her throat.

"H'm. And do you feel any pain—in your head or your back?"

"No—just *here*," said Heidi, pressing her hand to her chest. "As if a big stone were lying here."

"As if something you had eaten had disagreed with you?"

"Oh, no—it's just heavy as if I wanted to *cry*."

"Well, then cry, my child, if that will ease it."

"Oh, I mustn't do that—Miss Rottenmeier has forbidden it."

"I see. So you swallow it down. Yes? Well—now tell me, do you like to be in Frankfort?"

"Oh—yes," said Heidi, faintly, her tone contradicting her words.

"H'm—and where was it that you lived with your grandfather?"

"Up on the Alm ——"

"And you never found it lonely there?"

"Oh, *no!* It is so beautiful—so beautiful!"

Heidi could say no more. The recollection was too much for her overwrought nerves, and the sorrow, so long suppressed, burst forth in a storm of tears.

The doctor rose.

"There—now cry away, my child, for it will do you good," he said, softly laying her head back on the pillow. "Then try to sleep, and to-morrow you will find that everything is right again."

When he appeared again in the room where his friend was waiting for him, Mr. Sesemann turned, asking him anxiously for news.

"Well, the whole matter reduces to this, Sesemann," said the doctor, gravely. "First, to the fact that your little protégée is a sleep-walker, and it is she who has been coming downstairs every night in a state of complete unconsciousness and frightening your household into a fever of fright. And in the second place, she is literally wasting away from homesickness—so that in a little while there will be nothing left of her but skin and bone. There must be no time lost. I have only one medicine to prescribe for both ailments,—namely that she be sent home immediately, where the air of the mountains will restore her health. She must go to-morrow."

Mr. Sesemann was aghast.

"Sleep-walking—ill—wasting away from homesickness! All this in my house, and no one observed anything! But, my friend, you cannot ask me to send her

back to her people in such a condition, when she came to us sound and healthy. No, no—that is unthinkable! Take her in hand—do what you will—but cure her first and then send her home. Doctor,—I beg you to help me!"

"Sesemann, I tell you this is not a sickness that can be cured with powders and pills. The child has not a strong constitution; if she goes home immediately she will get well and strong in a very little time; but if you delay—well, you would not care to send her back to her grandfather a hopeless invalid?"

Mr. Sesemann was shocked at the seriousness of the case.

"No, no—in heaven's name, then, Doctor, let it be as you say—but if only ——" he took his friend's arm, and in deep concern paced back and forth across the room.

It was daylight when the doctor finally took his departure, and Mr. Sesemann understood that he had no choice but to send his daughter's little companion back to her mountain home.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

UP TO THE ALM ON A SUMMER'S EVENING

GREATLY disturbed, Mr. Sesemann mounted the stairs, and walked quickly to the door of Miss Rottenmeier's room, where he knocked so vigorously that the good woman started from her sleep with a cry of alarm.

"Please make haste, Miss Rottenmeier, and come to me in the dining-room," Mr. Sesemann called brusquely. "We must make preparations for a journey at once."

Miss Rottenmeier looked at her clock in bewilderment. It was barely five o'clock. Never in her life had she been roused at such an hour, and notwithstanding her haste to obey Mr. Sesemann's summons, her anxiety as to the meaning of such unwonted proceedings greatly delayed her progress in dressing.

Meanwhile, the master of the house had called all the servants, who, convinced that he had been attacked by the ghost, and was calling for assistance, came running from their rooms in such attire as they could collect in their haste.

But Mr. Sesemann met them in the dining-room, to all appearance his usual brisk and collected self.

Johann was promptly despatched to order the horses and carriage, Tinette was bidden to go to Heidi's room as soon as the child should have awakened, and dress her for travelling, and Sebastian was sent off to the

house where Dete was employed to bring her to the Sesemanns' at once.

By this time Miss Rottenmeier had made her appearance. In her agitation she had pinned her cap on backwards, so that at first glance she looked as if her head had been turned completely round; but Mr. Sesemann attributed this curious effect to the fact that she had been roused at so unaccustomed an hour, and without comment proceeded to give her her instructions: Miss Rottenmeier would be good enough to see that all of the little Swiss girl's possessions were packed at once, that a proper selection of any clothing that she might need was made from Clara's own wardrobe—and also that no time was lost in making these preparations.

Miss Rottenmeier stood stock still in the middle of the room, as if she were rooted to the floor. She had expected to hear a confidential account of the blood-curdling experiences of the past night, instead of which she had been given merely a list of prosaic and extremely disagreeable orders. But without staying to give her any explanations whatever, Mr. Sesemann had already hurried away to see his daughter.

He found Clara sitting up in bed, in great anxiety as to the meaning of the disturbance, which had wakened her; and, drawing up a chair, he told her quietly how the mystery had been solved, and why it was necessary that Heidi should be sent home immediately.

At first, Clara was inconsolable, and begged her father to find some means of curing Heidi without sending her away; but Mr. Sesemann was convinced now

that he had no right to disregard the doctor's advice, and was not to be moved from his decision even by his little daughter's tears. But he promised Clara that if she accepted cheerfully what could not be avoided, he would take her to Switzerland to visit Heidi the following year. After that Clara said no more, but asked that Heidi's trunk be brought into her room so that she could supervise the packing, and see that certain gifts were tucked away in it as a surprise for her little companion; and to this request Mr. Sesemann gladly gave his consent.

In the meantime, Dete had come, and was waiting in some uneasiness to see the master of the house. Just what had led to this so far unexplained request to see her, she had not been able to guess; but Mr. Sesemann had soon put the whole matter before her in a few crisp sentences, and informed her that she was to take Heidi back to her grandfather without delay. This piece of news, which disconcerted all her plans, took Dete unawares, and for a moment she did not have a word to say. She still had a very vivid recollection of the Alm-Uncle's furious command never to let him see her face again, and to bring the child back to him, after having brought her to him, and then taken her away, seemed to the astute Dete an ill-advised proceeding, to say the least.

But her usual readiness of mind did not desert her long, and after a moment she began to explain glibly that to-day, unfortunately, it was impossible for her to go; nor was to-morrow any better,—as for the next day,

and the next, yes, and the next again, her duties were such that she could not think of leaving them. Then Mr. Sesemann saw that she had no intention whatever of finding the time to make the journey, and he dismissed her without any more words. He then sent for Sebastian, and informed him that he was to take the little girl back to the mountains—that they should go to Basle that same day, and the next morning to the Alps above Dorfli.

"I shall write her grandfather a letter that will explain everything," he continued, "and there will be only one thing which you must bear in mind, Sebastian, and which you must not forget under any circumstances: to-night, when you are at the hotel in Basle, you must see to it that the door and the windows of the child's room are fastened so that they cannot be opened without the most strenuous effort. I will give you my card, and the proprietor, who knows me, will see to it that you are well provided for. Only remember that when the child is in bed, her door must be locked from the outside; otherwise, if she should again walk in her sleep she might come to serious harm. Do you understand?"

"What, sir!" cried Sebastian, as the solution of the mystery now dawned upon his simple mind. "Is it the little Ma'amselle who was the ghost, then?"

"Yes—and you and Johann are a pair of boobies," replied Mr. Sesemann shortly, and with that he sat down at his desk to write to the Alm-Uncle.

Sebastian, considerably disconcerted, muttered to himself:

"Well, certainly if that cowardly noodle of a Johann hadn't pulled me back, I'd soon have found out what the white figure was!" And, in fact, he was profoundly convinced of his own courage and daring now that the room, instead of being plunged in darkness, was lit up by the bright morning sunshine.

Heidi, who by now was all bathed, and dressed in her Sunday frock, was waiting patiently to learn what was going to happen to her; for Tinette, considering it beneath her dignity to exchange words with the plebeian Heidi, had hurried her out of bed and dressed her without a word of explanation. But Mr. Sesemann, having finished his letter, sent for her, and greeted her very kindly.

"Well, my child," he asked gayly, "what have you to say now?"

Heidi only looked up at him with wondering eyes.

"What? Don't you know what is going to happen?" laughed Mr. Sesemann. "Well, at last you are going home—right away!"

"Home!" echoed Heidi. Her face turned pale from the sudden shock of joy, and she could not utter another word.

"Come, don't you want to hear all about it?" asked Mr. Sesemann, again laughing good-humoredly. The color rushed back into Heidi's cheeks, and she stammered out an eager, timid, "Oh—*yes!*"

"Good. But you must eat a hearty breakfast, so sit down," said Mr. Sesemann. "Then the carriage will be at the door, and off you go."

But, though she tried obediently to eat, Heidi could not swallow a morsel—she hardly dared believe that the wonderful thing was true and that she would not waken presently, and find herself standing in her little night-dress at the open door. Mr. Sesemann, understanding her nervous excitement, did not press her, but merely told Miss Rottenmeier to see that Sebastian took provisions with him for the journey; then turning to Heidi, he bade her run up to see Clara, who was waiting for her. It was just what Heidi was longing to do, and she ran off eagerly.

"Come, Heidi, quickly!" called Clara from the bed. "See what I've had packed for you—and tell me if you are pleased." And with shining eyes, she began to enumerate a list of articles—dresses and handkerchiefs and undergarments, and sewing materials of all sorts—such as Heidi had never in her life dreamed of possessing as her own.

"And look at this, too, Heidi!" and Clara triumphantly held up a pretty basket. "Look inside!"

Heidi peeped, then jumped with joy; for in it lay a dozen lovely, round white rolls for Granny.

The two children had quite forgotten how near was the moment for Heidi's departure, and when Mr. Sesemann shouted that the carriage was at the door there was no time for sadness. Heidi ran to her room. Her precious book was still there, under her pillow, and in a corner of the wardrobe lay her old red shawl, which Miss Rottenmeier had contemptuously discarded as unworthy to be packed with the rest of her belongings, and

the handkerchief in which she had wrapped her old straw hat. Heidi tied these treasures carefully into the old shawl, and laid the bundle in her basket, where it was plainly visible; then putting on her pretty new hat, she left her room.

There was time only for a quick good-bye to Clara, for Mr. Sesemann was waiting to take her down to the carriage, and Miss Rottenmeier was standing at the head of the stairs to bid Heidi a majestic farewell. As the governess's eye fell upon the peculiar red bundle in the basket, she promptly confiscated it and threw it upon the floor.

"No, Adelheid," she said, chidingly, "you cannot leave this house with such an article, and you will have no need for it on your journey. Now, good-bye."

Poor Heidi dared not oppose this last remonstrance, but she looked at Mr. Sesemann with such tearful and despairing eyes, that he felt sure that she had been deprived of some very particular treasure.

"No, no, Miss Rottenmeier," he said quickly, in a decided tone. "Let her take home whatever she wants, and even if she chooses to go off with a swarm of kittens and mud turtles we won't forbid it."

With a shining face Heidi recovered her bundle, and taking Mr. Sesemann's hand, went down to the waiting carriage. He shook her hand warmly, wishing her a happy journey, and telling her not to forget him and Clara; and Heidi, who responded with all the warmth of her nature to the friendliness of others, thanked him very simply and sincerely for all his goodness to her.

"And tell the doctor that I thank him, too—a thousand times," she added shyly; for she remembered that the doctor had told her that "To-morrow you will see that everything will be all right," and she felt that it was to him she owed much of her happiness.

Then she climbed into the carriage, followed by Sebastian, who was carrying a large basket of provisions, and once more Mr. Sesemann shook her hand and wished her a pleasant journey. Then the carriage rolled away.

In the railway train that was taking her to Basle, Heidi sat as still as a mouse, holding her basket in her lap. Not for a moment would she let it out of her hands, and now and then she peeped inside to make sure that the delicious, freshly-baked rolls had not flown away. And—could it be true that she was really going back to her grandfather—that it was not a dream after all? The Alm-Uncle, Granny, Peter, the hut on the Alm—one by one the dear scenes and faces came before her eyes —all that she loved and was going to see again—but would it be just as it had been before?

"Sebastian," she asked suddenly, as the old dreadful fear flashed through her mind, "you are sure that the Granny on the Alm isn't dead?"

"Certainly I'm sure," was the reply. "Where did you ever get such an idea? Of course she isn't dead." Sebastian was half-dozing, and presently Heidi, too, began to nod; then her eyelids fell, and in a little while she was sleeping soundly, nor did she waken until Sebastian roused her when the train had stopped at Basle.

The next morning they started on the second stage of

the journey, and after several hours of travelling arrived at Mayenfeld.

Here Heidi, quite beside herself with joy, rushed out of the train, followed by Sebastian, who deposited the trunk on the platform, and then began to look about him with a doubtful and meditative eye. The train was winding away down the valley, and the prospect of the long climb up the mountainside that lay before him did not especially charm the imagination of Sebastian, who had other ideas for enjoying his brief holiday.

As he was looking about to find someone who might direct him on the way to Dorfli, he spied, not far from the station-house, a certain sturdy, broad-shouldered individual who was loading two full sacks onto a small wagon. Sebastian approached and made his inquiries: what was the quickest path to Dorfli, and how could the trunk be gotten up the mountain? After some discussion a plan eminently agreeable to Sebastian, though not in strict accordance with Mr. Sesemann's orders, was decided upon. The man, who was himself going up to Dorfli, agreed to take the little girl and her trunk as far as the village in his wagon, and from there someone else could take her up to the Alm later in the day.

"I can go by myself," said Heidi. "I know the way from Dorfli to the Alm very well."

Sebastian was delighted to have so easily escaped the disagreeable necessity of a long and fatiguing climb, and, drawing Heidi to one side, he cheerfully entrusted to her the letter which Mr. Sesemann had instructed him to give to the Alm-Uncle. Then, with more secrecy and

caution, he put into her hands a heavy roll of bank-notes, which, he informed her, was a present from the master. She must hide it in the very bottom of her basket, he added with a wary glance in the direction of the wagoner, and she must take great care not to lose it, or the master would be very, very angry.

"I won't lose it," said Heidi, and she tucked it into her basket under the rolls. Then Sebastian helped the wagoner to load the trunk onto the cart, after which he lifted the little girl up to the high seat beside the driver, and shook hands with her in a comradely farewell—meanwhile reiterating his warning, by means of significant nods and grimaces, to keep a sharp watch on her basket.

When the wagon was rolling away up the mountain, Sebastian, profoundly content to be relieved of his responsibilities, seated himself on a bench, and disposed himself comfortably to wait for the next train back to Basle.

The wagoner, as it turned out, was a baker, who kept a shop in Dorfli, whither he was taking his sacks of meal. He had never seen Heidi before, but like all the other villagers, he had heard of the child who had been brought to live with the Alm-Uncle, and he had known her parents in the old days. Having reached the conclusion that the little girl who had been intrusted to his care was no other than the much-talked-of Heidi, he was consumed with a curiosity to know *why* she had come back from Frankfort, and as they proceeded up the road to Dorfli, he began to question her.

"Now, I wonder might you be the child that was living with the Alm-Uncle—hey?"

"Yes," said Heidi.

"Did it go badly with you in Frankfort that you're coming back again?"

"Oh, no—nobody could have got on better than I did in Frankfort."

"Then why did you come away?"

"Because Mr. Sesemann allowed me to."

"Allowed you to!—Pah!—Why didn't you stay there, then, if they were willing you should?"

"Because I would a thousand times rather live with my grandfather on the Alm than anywhere else in the world."

"Humph!—you may feel different about it after a bit," replied the baker gruffly; but to himself he muttered, "It's strange though—maybe she knows better than we do."

After this he began to whistle, and did not talk any more, so that Heidi was left to enjoy in peace all the happiness which the sight of familiar landmarks excited in her. She recognized every tree and bush that they passed—the distant mountain peaks seemed to gaze down upon her with the tender welcome of old friends, and she could hardly restrain herself from springing down from her perch, and running and running. But although she was trembling with eagerness and impatience, she managed somehow to sit still, holding her basket tightly.

The clock in the belfry of the little mountain church

was just striking five when at last they drove into Dorfli; where instantly, and almost as if by magic, a throng of women and children collected around the wagon, so that Heidi was completely surrounded by the inquisitive crowd. The baker lifted her down from the seat, and when she had thanked him, and told him that her grandfather would come and get her trunk, she tried to run on her way, but the crowd hemmed her in, and a chorus of voices broke out in a perfect tempest of questions and comments. Heidi, however, pressed forward with such anxiety written on her face that the throng gave way a little and let her pass through.

"It's easy to see that she's frightened," a woman observed, staring after the child who was running up the path to the Alm with all the speed she could summon. "And she has reason enough, to be sure!"

Then each one began to tell the other how, in the last year, the Alm-Uncle had grown more fierce and unsociable than ever, how he never had a word for anyone, but looked at those who happened to cross his path as if he would actually do them an injury. If the child knew what was good for her, said the villagers, shaking their heads, she would go anywhere in the world rather than back to live with the old dragon on the Alm.

But here the baker put in his word. *He* knew a thing or two that they didn't know; and with a great air of mystery he described how the child had been brought to Mayenfeld by a gentleman who had parted from her in the most friendly way, and who had paid the baker himself for taking her to Dorfli not only without any

haggling, but even with an extra tip for his kindness. All of this, the baker concluded, plainly indicated that the child had been well liked and well cared for in Frankfort, but he could assure them that, nevertheless the child had come back of her own accord.

This information aroused the greatest interest and astonishment, and so speedily did any gossip travel in Dorfli that that very evening every household in the village was agog with the amazing news that Heidi had come back to the Alm-Uncle of her own free will.

Meantime, Heidi was running up the mountain path. Now and then she had to stop to get her breath, for the path became steeper, and her basket was not very light —but the one thought that engrossed her mind spurred her on again in spite of her weariness: "Will Granny be sitting at her spinning-wheel in the corner just as before? Will I surely find that she didn't die while I was gone?"

When at last she reached the goatherd's cottage, standing in the little hollow on the mountainside, her heart was beating and she was trembling so that she could hardly lift the latch of the door. But in another moment she was standing on the threshold of the tiny dark room, peering into the dimness, too breathless to utter a word.

"Oh, thou dear God!" murmured a low, melancholy voice in the dark corner by the chimney. "It was just so that Heidi used to run in—if only I could see her just once more before I die! Who is there?"

"It *is* Heidi, Granny! It is Heidi!" And with that

she flung herself into the old woman's lap, and clung to her, while the grandmother, not daring to believe this sudden and overwhelming joy, passed her trembling hand over the child's short, crisply curling hair.

"Yes—it is her hair—her voice. Ah, Heidi, Heidi, is it really you?" The tears were running down the wrinkled cheeks.

"Yes, yes, Granny! I have come back, and never, never will I go away again. I shall come to see you every day—and Granny, only look! See what I have brought you so that you won't have to eat that hard black bread again for many days!" And diving into her basket, Heidi laid the white rolls one by one on Granny's knee until it seemed to the old woman that there was no end to them.

"Child, child! What blessing have you brought me?" exclaimed Granny; then she pressed her aged hands over Heidi's hair and her smooth cheeks. "But the best of all blessings is yourself, my child. Speak to me again so that I can hear your voice."

Heidi began to tell her of the fears that had troubled her so long,—the fear that Granny might have died during her absence, and that she might never see her again. Presently, as they were talking, Brigida entered the room, and seeing the little girl, stopped short in amazement.

"Is it *Heidi!*" she gasped. "How is that possible?"

Heidi stood up, and gave her her hand.

"But you should see what a lovely dress she is wearing, Granny!" cried Brigida. "Why, one would hardly

know her! Does the pretty hat with the feather in it belong to you, too? Let me see how it looks when you put it on."

"No, no—I don't want it!" said Heidi quickly. "If you like it you can keep it because I don't need it any longer. I have my own."

She untied the old red shawl as she spoke, and took out the battered straw hat. It had grown more dilapidated looking than ever from all its late adventures, but Heidi did not seem to be at all troubled about its condition—all that concerned her was that when her Aunt Dete had taken her away, the grandfather had called after them that he never wanted to see her wearing a fine-feathered hat like Dete's—and it was because of this that she had so carefully kept the shabby old hat that she had always worn on the Alm.

Brigida protested at her generosity—the hat was so pretty.

Besides, if she did not want it she could sell it to the schoolmaster's daughter in Dorfli, who would pay a good price for it. But Heidi remained firm, and presently, to cut the discussion short, she quietly hid the hat away in the corner behind Granny.

"Now I must go to Grandfather," she said, taking the old woman's hand gently, "but to-morrow I will come again." Then she quickly took off her pretty dress, and covered her bare shoulders with the shawl.

"Why have you done that?" asked Brigida wonderingly.

"Because I would rather go to Grandfather like this

—otherwise he might not know me. You said that *you* hardly knew me at first."

"You could have kept it on," said Brigida, as she walked to the door with the child. "He would have known you easily enough. But," she added in a low voice, "you had better take care. Peterkin says that the Alm-Uncle grows more cross and gloomy every day, and never speaks a solitary word."

Heidi only answered, "Good-night," and with her basket on her arm she set out once more up the mountain.

The sun was just beginning to sink behind the vast snowfields, and the whole scene was colored with its splendor; the rocky pinnacles of the falcon's nest blazed like twin flames against the sky, the drifting clouds were rosy red, and the grassy slopes were streaked with long golden beams. But far below the valley already lay in the soft grey shadows of the twilight. Heidi stopped. Not even in her dreams had the noble beauty of her beloved mountains appeared to her in such majesty, and as she stood there, tears of pure happiness and awe ran down her cheeks. Then, clasping her hands together, she lifted her face to the calm sky, and thanked the good God for having brought her home.

And now at last she saw the hut before her, with the ancient pine-trees standing beside it like faithful sentinels, their branches tossing in the evening wind. And there, seated on the bench—his pipe between his lips just as when she had first seen him—was the solitary figure of the Alm-Uncle.

Before he was even aware of her approach, Heidi had rushed to him, and, throwing her basket on the ground, she clasped her arms around him crying over and over again in her breathless joy:

"Grandfather! Grandfather! Grandfather!"

He did not speak. For the first time in long, long years his eyes were wet, and he drew his hand across them. Then very gently he took Heidi on his knee.

"So?" his black eyes scrutinized her keenly. "You have come back, Heidi? You don't look very citified—did they send you away?"

"Oh, no, no, Grandfather! You must not think that! They were all more kind to me than I can say—Clara and Grandmamma and Mr. Sesemann. But you see I wanted so much—so much to come back again—sometimes I could hardly bear it, and often I thought I must run away, Grandfather—but that would have been ungrateful.

"Then one morning Mr. Sesemann called me very early—though now I know that it was the good doctor who helped me—perhaps it's all told in the letter." She picked up the basket, and taking out Mr. Sesemann's letter and the roll of bills, thrust them both into the old man's hand.

"The money is yours," said the Alm-Uncle, and he laid it down on the bench. Then he opened the letter, read it through carefully, and put it in his pocket without a word.

"Well," said he, "do you think you could drink a cup of milk with me now? Take the money," he added, as

he rose; "there is enough to buy you a bed, and new dresses to last you for years."

"I don't need it, Grandfather. I have a bed already, and Clara has given me so many dresses, that I'll *never* need to get any more."

"Nevertheless, take it," repeated the Alm-Uncle. "Put it in your chest—you may need it one day."

Heidi obeyed. Then he took her hand and together they went into the hut.

Beside herself with joy, Heidi ran here and there, as if she could never look enough on the rough familiar furnishings; but when she had clambered up the ladder to the loft, she called to the Alm-Uncle in dismay:

"Grandfather, my bed has gone!"

"It will come back. Come now and drink your milk."

He had filled the wooden bowl to the very brim, and when Heidi had drunk it all and given back the cup to be filled again, she drew a long breath, remarking:

"There's no milk in the world as good as ours, Grandfather!"

All at once came Peter's shrill familiar whistle, and like lightning Heidi sprang to the door to meet the flock of goats that came leaping down from the pastures with Peter in their midst.

"Good-evening, Peter! Little Swan—Little Bear—have you forgotten me!"

Peter simply stopped, and gaped with wonder, open-mouthed and wide-eyed. But the goats recognized their old playfellow at once, and crowded around her, bleating with joy. The incorrigible Thistlefinch, in her ea-

gerness to get near her, jumped clean over two other goats. The timid Snowhopper actually butted the fierce Turk out of her way; who, in his astonishment at this audacity, stood as if he had been turned to stone, and only thrust his beard indignantly in the air to show Heidi that he was there, too.

Alternately caressing and pushing her old friends, Heidi made her way through the herd to Peter, who had not even yet found his tongue.

"Aren't you going to say 'Good-evening,' Peter?"

"Are you back again?" the boy managed to bring out at last. Then, having shaken hands, he asked as he had always asked when they had come back together from the pastures, "Are you coming with us to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow—but the next day. To-morrow I must go to Granny."

"It's good that you are back," said Peter, and his round, simple face beamed with satisfaction.

He had a hard time of it to coax his goats away from Heidi, and not until she had hidden herself in the stall with Little Swan and Little Bear could he make his herd behave themselves and follow him down the mountain.

When Heidi went back to the hut she found that the Alm-Uncle had made her bed again of fresh, fragrant hay, over which he had carefully spread a linen cover.

During the night, he constantly left his own bed, and climbed up to the loft to see if the child were sleeping quietly, and to make sure that the moonlight was not shining in her face. But Heidi hardly stirred the whole night through. Her rest was deeper and sweeter than

she had known in months, for the dreadful, burning longing in her heart was eased—she had once more seen the mountains glowing in the evening sun, and had heard the wind rushing through the pine-trees,—she had come back to the Alm at last.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SUNDAY MORNING

HEIDI stood under the waving pine-trees, waiting for her grandfather to take her down to the goatherd's hut, where she was to stay while he went on to Dorfli to fetch her trunk. She was eager to see Granny again, and to hear how the rolls had tasted, but, in spite of her impatience to be off, the beloved song of the winds in the tossing branches, and the fragrance of the distant pastures still worked their old enchantment.

It was Saturday morning, when, according to his regular custom, the Alm-Uncle always put his little domain into good order. This morning the work was finished rather earlier than usual, and presently he appeared, well satisfied to have begun the day so briskly.

"Well, well, come along!" he said cheerfully, and hand in hand they started down the path.

The blind woman's quick ears told her of their approach even before Heidi had lifted the latch, and she called joyfully from within:

"Is that the child? Have you come again, Heidi?"

Heidi sprang into the room, and ran to Granny, who seized her hands, and clung to her as if she were still fearful lest the little girl should be taken from her again. Then Heidi sat down beside her, and asked eagerly how the rolls had tasted. They were delicious,

Granny declared, and Brigida added that if her mother could have white bread to eat all the time, she would certainly get much stronger.

Heidi, much struck by this remark, sat for several moments in thought. Then she exclaimed triumphantly:

"Then I know just what I can do, Granny! I'll write a letter to Clara, and she'll send me twice as many rolls as I brought you. You see, I'd saved up a big pile of them to bring you, only they were taken away from me, but Clara promised that I should have just as many again, and she will send me the rest right away."

"Ah, it would be so fine if you could," said Brigida. "But," she added with a sigh, "I'm afraid it would get stale. The baker in Dorfli makes nice white rolls, but I cannot find money enough even to buy black bread."

A sudden thought made Heidi's whole face brighten.

"But I have lots and lots of money, Granny!" she cried, clapping her hands with joy. "And now I know what to do with it. Every day you shall have a loaf of white bread, and two on Sundays, and Peter can bring them to you from Dorfli."

"No, no, dear child," protested the old woman. "You must not do that with your money. It was not given to you for that—you must give it to the Alm-Uncle, and let him tell you how to spend it."

But Heidi would not listen, and dancing about the room, she chanted:

"Now Granny will have white bread every day, and she will grow strong and well! And oh! Granny! When you are quite, quite well, you will certainly be

able to see again. I am sure that the darkness comes because you are so weak now."

To this the old woman, unwilling to cloud the child's joy, said nothing at all, and at that moment Heidi's attention was caught by the sight of a worn and dusty hymn-book lying on the shelf.

"Granny, do you know that I can read now?" she cried. "Would you like me to read you a hymn from your book?"

"*Read!*" exclaimed the old woman in amazement. "Is it possible? Oh, if I *could* hear one of the old songs it would make me so happy!"

So Heidi climbed up on a chair and got down the old book, which had lain untouched for so long that it was covered with a thick layer of dust. She brushed it off tidily, then drawing up her stool to Granny's side, asked which hymn she should read.

"Whatever one you choose, child," and Granny stopped her spinning-wheel, and waited breathlessly for her to begin.

"Here is one about the Sun, Granny," said Heidi, after turning over several pages. "I'll begin with this one."

As she read on, growing more and more warmed and inspired by the simple and beautiful words of the old hymn, Granny sat perfectly still, with her hands folded in her lap; and when Heidi looked up from her book at last, she saw that while the tears were running down the old woman's cheeks, the blind face wore a look of joy such as she had never seen on it before.

"Read one more, Heidi—just one." And Heidi read on.

When she had finished, Granny repeated the last words softly to herself. Then she turned her serene, bright face toward the little girl.

"Oh, Heidi,—it seems as if the light had really come again. It shines in my heart. You do not know how happy you have made me."

A little later the Alm-Uncle tapped at the window, and signed to Heidi that it was time to go. But first, Heidi promised Granny that she would come again the next day, and that even on the days when she went to the pastures with Peter she would spend only half of the time with him, and the other half at the hut. To be able to "Bring the light again" to Granny was a greater happiness for Heidi even than to be out in the sunlight among the flowers.

As they walked homeward, Heidi told the Alm-Uncle how she had planned to get white bread for Granny to eat every day.

"Even if Granny says I must not do it, you will let me have the money that Mr. Sesemann gave me, won't you, Grandfather? Then I can give some to Peter to buy a fresh loaf every day in Dorfli, and two on Sundays."

"But what about your bed, Heidi? A proper bed would be a good thing for you, and still there would be money enough left to buy all the bread anyone could want."

But Heidi declared that she slept far better on her

pile of hay than on her feather mattress in Frankfort, and coaxed him so eagerly that he soon gave way.

"The money is yours," said he. "Spend it in the way that makes you happiest. It will buy bread for old Granny for many a long year."

"Oh, thank you, Grandfather! Now she will never have to eat that hard black bread any more," and Heidi skipped along beside him, singing for joy like a little bird. Then suddenly she became quiet and thoughtful.

"You know, Grandfather," she said after a moment or two, "I was just thinking that if the good God had given me right away what I begged for so hard, all these lovely things wouldn't have happened. For, if I had come home then, I wouldn't have been able to read to Granny, and she would only have had a little bread. But God made everything much more beautiful than what I asked for—so it's just as Grandmamma told me. Oh, I'm glad that the good God did not give in to me when I prayed and begged so hard, and I shall always pray to Him and thank Him, and when He doesn't do right away what I ask, I'll remember how it was, and be sure that it is because He knows what is best. We'll pray to Him every day, won't we, Grandfather? And never forget Him, so that He will never forget us."

"And what if one does forget Him?" asked the Alm-Uncle gruffly, after a short pause.

"Then," said Heidi, looking up earnestly into the old man's face, "nothing goes well. For then God lets him go his own way, and when he has sorrow and complains, other people will not pity him, but they'll say he turned

away from God who could have helped him, and so God has let him go."

The Alm-Uncle did not speak for a few moments; then he said:

"That is true, Heidi. Where did you learn it?"

"Grandmamma explained it to me in Frankfort."

"But," went on the Alm-Uncle, almost as if he were talking to himself, "if one *has* turned away, he must abide by it—if God has forgotten, He has forgotten."

"Oh, no, Grandfather! One can go back. I know that too, because Grandmamma told me. It's like the story in my book—but you don't know the story, do you? I will read it to you when we get home, and you will see how lovely it is."

When they reached the Alm, the old man put down the basket in which he had carried up part of Heidi's things from Dorfli, and seated himself on the bench outside the hut, while Heidi ran indoors to fetch her precious book. When she had brought it, she sat down beside him, and laid it open on her knees—indeed, so often had she pored over the beautiful story that the book opened to the very place of its own accord.

Then she began to read, and the Alm-Uncle listened, smoking his pipe. She read of the young man's happiness when he lived in his father's house, and tended the flocks in the fertile meadows, and watched the sun rise and set beyond the hills.

"But then, he suddenly decided that he wanted to be his own master. He forsook his father, and went his way, and spent his substance in riotous living. Then,

when he was in great want, he hired himself to a farmer who put him to tend his swine and gave him only rags to wear, and husks to stay his hunger. And in his misery he remembered the blessings that he had enjoyed in his father's house, and he blamed himself for his ingratitude so that he wept with remorse and longing. Then he thought, 'I will return to my father, and I will say to him, "I am not worthy to be called thy son; nevertheless, let me live with thee as thy servant."' So he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him—and then, Grandfather, what do you think his father did?" asked Heidi, breaking off. "You'd think of course that he would have been angry with his son, and would have said to him, 'Didn't I tell you how it would be?' But see now how it is in the story." And she read on eagerly.

"His father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.' And the servants did as they were bidden and there was great rejoicing.

"Isn't that a beautiful story, Grandfather?" asked Heidi, looking up with a shining face.

"Yes," said the Alm-Uncle, after a little pause. "It

is a beautiful story." But he seemed so grave and thoughtful that Heidi said nothing more, but sat looking at the pictures in silence.

Presently, she laid the book on his knees, and pointing to the picture that showed the son clad in rich garments and standing beside his father, said:

"See, Grandfather, how happy he is."

A few hours later, when Heidi was deep in slumber, the old man softly climbed the ladder to the loft, and putting down his lamp so that the light should not waken her, stood gazing down at her peaceful, rosy face. Her hands were folded, for Heidi had not forgotten to say her prayers, and even her sleeping features wore an expression of happy trustfulness.

For a long time the Alm-Uncle stood without moving; then slowly he bowed his head, and, folding his hands together, muttered slowly and half aloud:

"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Two great tears rolled down his seamed and wrinkled cheeks.

Early the next morning, the Alm-Uncle was standing at the door of the hut. It was Sunday, and already the church bells were ringing, faintly but clearly, down in the valley. On the Alm the birds were twittering, and over everything shone the golden sunlight. After several minutes the old man went back into the hut, and called to Heidi who had not yet awakened.

"Come, Heidi—the sun is up! And put on your best dress—we must go to church together."

Never had Heidi heard that summons, and it did not take her long to put on the pretty dress that she had brought from Frankfort, and to hurry down to join her grandfather.

When she saw him, she stopped short in delight and astonishment—yet hardly able to believe her eyes.

"Grandfather, how nice you look!" she cried, clapping her hands. "I never saw you in your beautiful Sunday coat with silver buttons, and I *never* saw you look so lovely!"

The old man smiled.

"You look very fine yourself," said he. "Now let us go."

As they went down the mountain hand-in-hand, all the church bells in the valley were ringing.

"Grandfather, do you hear them?" said Heidi. "It's as if there were a big festival!"

Nearly all the good folk of Dorfli were already in church and ready to begin the service when Heidi and the Alm-Uncle entered and slipped quietly into a pew near the door. But in the middle of the first hymn, one of the congregation, who was sitting near by, spied them, and nudging his neighbor, whispered in amazement:

"Look! The Alm-Uncle is in church!"

The other looked, gaped, and nudged *his* neighbor to impart the same incredible news. In less than a minute the whisper had spread through the whole church.

"The Alm-Uncle is here! See! The Alm-Uncle is here."

The women could not resist the temptation to turn their heads, and many of them lost the tune so completely that the leader had the greatest difficulty to bring the hymn to a decorous close.

But when the Pastor began the prayer, the disturbance quieted; for so warmly did he utter the words of praise and thanksgiving that the whole congregation felt strangely moved and impressed as if a great joy had come to them all.

At the end of the service, the Alm-Uncle took Heidi's hand again, and walked with her from the church to the parish house, while all the villagers gathered around on the green in little groups to watch them, and to comment on the extraordinary event; especially, to see whether the Alm-Uncle would leave the parish house with hatred and anger written on his face, or whether after all these years he had come at last to make his peace with the Pastor. None of them could guess what had brought the old man down to the village church again; but one by one new voices put a word into the hum of wondering discussion.

"Certainly we all could see how gently he took the child by the hand. It may well be that after all he's, at heart, not such a bad old fellow as we think."

"Isn't that just what I said myself," the baker put in triumphantly. "I ask you, is it likely the child would leave a place where she had everything her heart could wish for, to come back to live with the

Alm-Uncle, if he was a cross, wild fellow as she was afraid of?"

Then a woman spoke up saying that she had heard many things from Brigida and old Granny which to her mind proved that the Alm-Uncle was a different sort of person from what common opinion held him to be. And finally one of the villagers suggested that they should no longer stand aloof from the Alm-Uncle, but rather, believing the good of him that they had lately seen and heard, they should welcome him again as an old friend who had returned after a long absence.

Meanwhile, the Alm-Uncle had entered the parish-house, and knocked at the door of the study. The Pastor opened it, and instead of showing surprise, welcomed his unwonted visitor as if he had expected to see him. He took the old man's hand, and shook it warmly, while the Alm-Uncle, deeply moved by this unexpected friendliness, stood in silence. After a moment or two, however, he raised his head, and with an air of dignity and humility, said:

"I have come, Pastor, to ask your pardon for what I said to you that day on the Alm, and to ask you not to hold it against me that I refused your well-meant counsel. In all that you said you were right, and I was wrong.

"This winter I am going to follow your advice, and come down to Dorfli to live during the cold weather, for, as you said, the child is too delicate to pass the winter months on the Alm. And if the village people shun me when I come back among them it will be no

more than I deserve—but I think that *you* will not turn away from me."

The Pastor's friendly eyes shone with pleasure, and he took the old man's hand once more and pressed it warmly.

"My friend," he said, "you will never regret the day on which you decided to come back and live among us. As for myself—why, I am looking forward to passing many a long winter's evening with you at the fireside. And the child will certainly find warm friends among us." As he spoke he laid his hand on Heidi's curly head.

Then he walked to the door of his house with the Alm-Uncle, and in the sight of all the people again shook his hand as that of an old and beloved friend.

Hardly had the door closed behind the Pastor than the villagers pressed forward eagerly to greet the Alm-Uncle. So many hands were stretched out to him that he did not know which to take first, and from every side the voices of his old neighbors spoke his name warmly. He responded to their welcome, and when they heard from his lips that he would come down to live in Dorfli again during the winter, they cheered for joy; for long ago he had been the most beloved man in the whole village.

Many of the people walked part of the way with him, as he and Heidi started back toward the Alm, nor would they leave him until he had repeated his promise to come down again and live among them. When they had at last turned back, the Alm-Uncle stood watching them with such a brightness on his face that Heidi exclaimed in wonder:

"Oh, Grandfather—I have never seen you look so beautiful!"

He smiled at this; then his black eyes became very soft and gentle.

"Do you think so, child? Well, you see, Heidi, to-day I am more happy than I deserve to be. To have made one's peace with God and man makes one's heart light. God was good to me when He sent you back to me again."

They had reached the goatherd's hut, and to Heidi's surprise the Alm-Uncle opened the door himself and entered.

"Good-morning, Granny," he called cheerfully. "I dare say there's some more hammering and nailing to be done before the winter winds begin to blow."

"Dear God! Can it be the Alm-Uncle!" cried the old woman, quite overwhelmed. "Ah, that I should have lived to know this day! God be praised that I can at last thank you for all the kindnesses you have done me!" And she stretched out two trembling old hands which the Alm-Uncle took in his own and shook warmly.

"And now let me beg one thing more—something that comes from the very depths of my heart," went on the blind woman, clinging tightly to his hands. "If I have ever done you an injury do not punish me by again sending the child away! Do not take her from me before I die! You do not know what she means to me!"

"Have no fear of that, Granny," said the Alm-Uncle, gently. "God willing, we shall all live together for many a year to come."

Presently, Brigida drew him aside, and showing him the feathered hat that Heidi had brought from Frankfort, told him that the child had given it to her, but that she did not like to keep it. The old man glanced at Heidi; then a strange little smile glimmered in his eyes, and he answered:

"The hat is yours—if she chose to give it to you, keep it."

Of course the honest Brigida was delighted.

"It's worth at least ten dollars!" she exclaimed. "But what blessings the child has brought from Frankfort! Do you know, I've half a mind to send my Peterkin there, Uncle—what do you think of it?"

The grandfather's eyes twinkled, as he replied that he thought it could certainly do Peterkin no harm, but that it was best to wait for the opportunity to present itself.

At this very moment Peter appeared. Apparently he was in frantic haste, and had bumped his head against the door so that it fairly hummed. Now, breathless and panting, he halted in the middle of the room, and held out to Heidi a letter which he had just brought up from Dorfli.

Wondering, everyone crowded around the table, while Heidi opened the letter, and read it aloud without the least difficulty. It was from Clara Sesemann, who wrote to tell her friend that since she had gone away the days were so dull that she could hardly wait for night to come, and that her father had promised her that early in the autumn after she had spent some time at the baths in Ragatz, they would go to pay a visit to Heidi on the

Alm. Grandmamma, she added, was coming, too, and had told her to say to Heidi that she was sending some coffee, and some more rolls to "the other Granny."

This delightful news gave them all so much to talk about that the afternoon flew by, and the Alm-Uncle himself did not notice how swiftly the time passed. But at length he rose, and took Granny's hand once more.

"But better than all these good and blessed things," said the old woman with deep feeling, "is to once more take the hand of an old friend—it warms the heart, Uncle, and brings a joy that nothing else can give. Will you come again to-morrow—you and the child?"

The Alm-Uncle promised her that they would both come, then he and Heidi left the hut together, hand in hand.

And as they wandered up the mountain path, the sound of the church bells floated upward from the valley, clear and sweet in the evening stillness; the scent of grass and flowers rose from the dewy earth, and the last rosy colors of the setting sun lingered on the far snow-clad peaks until they had entered the Alm-hut together.

PART II

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PREPARATIONS FOR A JOURNEY

THE good doctor, whose interest and advice had brought about Heidi's return to the Alm, was walking along one of the broad streets of Frankfort in the direction of the Sesemanns' house.

It was a fresh September morning, so bright and sunny that one would have thought every heart must be gladdened by its blue skies and blowing winds; yet the doctor's step was heavy, and his head was bowed. Indeed, during the last months his whole appearance had altered; an expression of sadness lay upon the kindly face once so full of twinkling good humor, and his hair had grown noticeably greyer since the early summer; for it was then, shortly after Heidi's departure, that he had lost his daughter, an only child, whose death, in the full bloom of her youth, had taken from him all that was most precious in his life.

When he had reached his old friend's house, the door was opened to him by Sebastian, and the butler's wooden face brightened at the sight of the good doctor, whom everyone loved.

"Is your master at home, Sebastian?"

Sebastian ushered him to the library.

"Ah, my friend! Is that you?" cried Mr. Sesemann, hurrying forward to greet him. "I am more than glad to see you. Sit down! I wanted to ask you again about

taking Clara to Switzerland—do you still keep to your decision? The child's heart is so set upon the trip that I cannot bear to disappoint her unless you still consider it absolutely necessary."

"My dear Sesemann, why do you bring this up again?" asked the doctor, as he seated himself. "I wish your mother were here—she would make the whole case clear to you, as I seem unable to do. To-day is the third time you have had me here to repeat the same thing!"

"I know—you have good reason to be impatient with me, but surely, my old friend," said Mr. Sesemann, laying his hand on the other's shoulder, "but surely you must understand how hard it is for me to deny the child what I had promised her. She has thought of nothing for months but of her trip to the Alps to see Heidi ——"

"Sesemann, she cannot go," interrupted the doctor, in a tone that plainly showed there was no alternative. "Do you not see for yourself how the matter stands? Clara has been more delicate this past summer than she has ever been before, and for her in her present state of health to take a long and fatiguing journey is absolutely out of the question, unless we are prepared to run grave risks. Think!" he went on earnestly, seeing his friend's downcast face. "It is September already—do you imagine that Clara could endure the cold Alpine atmosphere at this season? Then, too, she would have to be carried up the mountain in a chair—which would be utterly exhausting for her. I tell you, it is simply not to be thought of, Sesemann. If you want me to, I will go and talk to Clara myself—she is a reasonable

child, and will see that it is only for her good that you have to disappoint her. Besides,—I have a plan. This coming spring—let us say in May—she can go to Ragatz, and there she could stay until it is warm in the mountains. Then, when she grows stronger, she can be taken up on the mountains from time to time, and certainly she would enjoy such excursions far more then than she could now. You *must* understand, Sesemann, that if we hope for your child's recovery we cannot take any dangerous risk, but must exercise the utmost care and watchfulness."

At this Mr. Sesemann, who had sat listening to his friend, silent and despondent, suddenly sprang up.

"Doctor," he cried, imploringly, "tell me honestly—have you any hope that she may be cured?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"If you want the truth, Sesemann," he said gently, "I cannot tell you that I think there is much hope of her ever being entirely cured. But think of me, my friend—after all, you *have* your child—who misses you when you are away, and welcomes you when you come home. Ah, Sesemann, you have *that* blessing! Think of me in my lonely house!"

Mr. Sesemann, who had been pacing up and down the room, stopped short, and looked sadly and affectionately at the other's worn and sorrowing face. Then, after a moment or two, he went up to him, and laid his hand on his arm.

"Doctor, *I* have a plan now!" he said suddenly. "I cannot bear to see you like this—you are not yourself

at all. You must get away—you *must*. And my idea is that *you* shall go to visit Heidi in the Alps in our stead!"

The doctor was taken completely by surprise, but Mr. Sesemann would not listen to his expostulations. Delighted as a boy with his plan, he grasped his friend by the arm, and hurried him off to Clara to tell her of the splendid scheme that he had just thought of.

The sick child always brightened up when the doctor made his appearance, for whenever he came he never failed to have something jolly or interesting to tell her. Now,—understanding as she did why it had been so long since she had seen him—she longed to cheer him in his sorrow.

When he entered the room, she stretched out her hand to him, and made him sit near her, while her father, taking her other hand, began to speak of the trip to Switzerland.

Poor Mr. Sesemann, having with difficulty broken the news that, for her, the journey would have to be postponed, and dreading to see the tears that he felt were sure to come, hastened on to tell her his new plan, and to explain to her how much good the trip would do for their beloved friend.

The tears did come to the gentle blue eyes—the disappointment was a bitter one indeed for the little invalid, who all summer, through the dull, lonely days, had cheered herself with the hope of seeing her little playmate again, and of visiting the wonderful mountains about which Heidi had so often told her. But she

knew well that her father would refuse her nothing unless it would bring suffering to her, so, swallowing the tears so that he would not see how deep her disappointment was, she tried to cheer herself with the hope that still remained. After a moment, she laid her little hand on the doctor's and said bravely:

"Oh, please, please—you *will* go, won't you? And you'll see Heidi, and can come back and tell me what it is like on the Alm, and about Heidi and the Alm-Uncle and Peter and the goats —— Oh, I feel as if I knew them all so well! And I'll give you some presents to take to Heidi and the old Granny! Please, dear doctor, go—and I'll take all the cod liver oil you want me to!"

Whether or not it was this handsome promise that won the doctor's consent, one cannot tell; but it may be assumed that it did, for he laughed and said:

"Then I must certainly go, my little Clara—if only to make you get as round and rosy as Papa and I would like to see you. And now—have you two decided when I must start on my travels?"

"To-morrow! Can't you go to-morrow, Doctor?" begged Clara.

"Yes—why not?" put in Mr. Sesemann. "The sun is bright now and the sky is blue—it would be a pity to lose such glorious days on the Alps."

Again the doctor laughed.

"Soon you will be finding fault with me because I am not there already, Sesemann," said he, rising. "Well, well, then—I suppose I must hurry and get my things ready."

But Clara caught his hand, and would not let him go until he had again promised solemnly to tell her about everything that happened on the Alm, and to distribute carefully the presents that she would get ready for him to take just as soon as Miss Rottenmeier returned from her walk.

The doctor, of course, promised to forget nothing, and then took his leave.

Now, a curious thing about servants in general is their extraordinary faculty of knowing all about many family matters even before their masters have given them the least information about them; and this gift, it would seem, was possessed by Sebastian and Tinette in the highest degree, for no sooner had Sebastian accompanied the doctor to the front door, than Tinette appeared in Clara's room as if her little mistress had already sent for her.

"Tinette, will you take that bag, and fill it full of those nice white cakes that we eat with our coffee," said Clara, pointing to the bag that had been in readiness for many days. With her customary air of ill-humor, the maid did as she was told, muttering to herself as she closed the door behind her:

"It's worth the trouble, I must say!"

And meanwhile Sebastian, as he opened the door for the doctor, was saying with a courtly bow:

"Will the doctor be so kind as to give the little Ma'amselle a greeting from Sebastian when he sees her?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the doctor, looking at

him in surprise. "And do you know already about my journey?"

Sebastian was somewhat disconcerted.

"Why, I—I—that is—I don't know exactly," he stammered, turning red. "I mean to say that I just happened to be going through the dining-room when I heard the young lady's name mentioned as it were—and—er—it's like this, you know—one puts one thing and another together ——"

"Of course! Of course!" laughed the doctor. "One thought leads to another, so to speak. Well, Sebastian, I will be glad to deliver your greetings." And he started off hurriedly.

But he had gone only a few steps when he encountered a second interference. The high wind had caused Miss Rottenmeier to cut short her daily promenade, and she met the doctor just as she was hurrying back to the house with her long cape flattering out behind her like a sail. The doctor would have been content with a brief though friendly exchange of greetings, but Miss Rottenmeier had a decorous weakness for the doctor, and welcomed an opportunity to chat with him. Having come face to face with each other, they both side-stepped this way and that for a moment or two, each offering to make way for the other, until a vigorous and impatient gust of wind fairly blew Miss Rottenmeier against the doctor like a ship in a tempest. Thus, not being able to make his escape, he stood and talked to her for a few minutes, telling her about the plan for his journey to the Alps. Then, being a very wise gentleman in more ways than

one, he wound up by speaking of the presents he was to take with him, and begging her to pack them, as—to quote his artful words—no one but Miss Rottenmeier *could* pack.

This delicate flattery acted like a charm, and Clara, who from past experience had prepared for a battle with her governess, found to her surprise that Miss Rottenmeier not only did not oppose her wish to send presents to Heidi, but even showed a most amiable and unwonted disposition to fall in with the plan. She admired the things that lay in readiness on the table, and wrapped them and packed them in her very best style.

First of all, there was a warm, pretty cloak with a hood for Heidi, which she could wear when she went to visit Granny on cold winter days, and so would not have to wait for her grandfather to come and wrap her up in the old sack. Next there was a thick, woolen shawl for Granny, which would keep her from feeling the bitter winds that in winter shook the cottage. Then came the bag full of cakes—also for Granny, who might enjoy a change even from the white rolls when she drank her coffee. There was a perfectly huge sausage, which was meant particularly for Peter, but Clara, fearing that in his rapture he might eat it all up at once, had it marked for Brigida with the directions that when she and her mother had taken their share, Peter was to have the rest doled out to him in reasonable portions. And lastly, there was a package of tobacco for the Alm-Uncle, for Heidi had often told Clara how, in the evenings, he sat and smoked on his bench in front of the hut.

Then besides these special gifts there were a countless number of little bags and boxes and packages, and Clara's eyes sparkled in anticipation of Heidi's joy as she discovered all the delightful things that were hidden in them.

At last all was ready; Miss Rottenmeier stood gazing with satisfaction at the huge box, and meditating upon the doctor's tribute to her peerless skill in the art of packing. Then Sebastian appeared, and swinging the heavy burden up on his sturdy shoulders, at once set off with it to the doctor's house.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A GUEST ON THE ALM

THE pink flush of dawn was tinting the mountains; the fresh morning wind rustled through the branches of the pine-trees. Heidi had just awakened, and having dressed hastily, clambered down the ladder, and ran to the door of the hut. Her grandfather was already out of doors, where he stood looking critically at the sky to see what kind of weather was promised for the day. A light fleece of delicate, rosy clouds drifted across the distant pinnacles above them, the blue deepened moment by moment, and now, as the sun rose, it shot forth its beams over the grey crags and the green pasturelands in streams of liquid gold.

"Oh, how beautiful! How beautiful it is!" cried Heidi. "Good-morning, Grandfather!"

"So! You are up bright and early!" said the Alm-Uncle. He turned and took her hand in greeting. Then she ran off to dance under the pine-trees.

When the old man had finished washing and milking his two little goats, he brought them out from their stall to wait for Peter. As soon as they saw Heidi they leaped toward her, and she embraced them lovingly, while, bleating for joy, they pushed and butted each other jealously in their eagerness to press closely to her.

"No, no, Little Bear," she chided as the brown goat

gave Little Swan a rough push in her endeavor to lay her head on her shoulder. "Why, you are as bad as old Turk!" And immediately the goat drew back, while the white one tossed her head as much as to say, "Well! Certainly no one could say that *my* manners are as bad as Turk's!"

Very soon Peter's whistle was heard, and the flock came into view, with Thistlefinch leaping on ahead.

"I don't see why you can't come with us to-day," the boy began in a sulky tone.

"But I can't, Peter. They may arrive from Frankfort any minute, and I mustn't be away from home."

"You're always saying that."

"Well, I can't help it. That's the way it must be until they come. Do you think I could go off, and not be here to greet them?"

"The Alm-Uncle can meet 'em, can't he?"

At this point the old man's deep voice called from the hut:

"Why isn't the army on the march—eh? Is the fault with the troops or with the general?"

Instantly, Peter made a right-about-face, swung his long rod so that it whistled through the air, and the herd, with Peter in their midst, capered off. Heidi went into the hut to begin her morning tasks. Ever since she had come back from Frankfort, she never failed to put the hut in order every day. She spread the covers neatly over her bed of hay, making it smooth and neat, she put away the cups and plates, and scrubbed the table until it was as white as only pinewood can be; and the Alm-

Uncle, seeing how trim and orderly she made everything look, often said:

"Every day is like Sunday now. The child learned some good things in Frankfort after all."

But this morning, although she went to her tasks as usual, she found it very hard to finish them; for the day was so fresh and beautiful that she could not resist the temptation now and then to drop her dust-cloth, and run out to look at the blue sky and the sunny slopes. Then she would remember that the table had not yet been scrubbed, and that she had left the three-legged stool standing in the middle of the floor, and back she would go to her neglected duties. But soon the song of the wind in the pine-trees would coax her forth again, and in spite of herself she must run out to skip and dance in the warm breeze.

The Alm-Uncle, who was constantly going back and forth between the hut and his workshop, smiled at her lively prancing and cavorting; but all at once he was startled by a shrill cry.

"Grandfather!" shrieked Heidi. "Come! *Come!*"

As he hurried out, frightened, he saw Heidi running toward the cliff shouting:

"They are coming! They are coming! I see the doctor already!" And away she darted down the hillside to greet her old friend.

"Oh, I am *glad* to see you, Doctor!" she cried, affectionately clinging to the arm that he had held out to her as she ran toward him. "And I thank you a thousand *thousand* times!"

"And I am very glad to see you again, my child; but," he added smiling, "for what do you thank me?"

"For having let me come back to my grandfather."

The good doctor's face was alight; he had not expected to find such a warm, delightful reception on the Alp, for indeed he had hardly believed that Heidi, who had seen him so little, would even recognize him. But the child's eyes were shining with joy and gratitude and she hugged his arm as if it were that of an old and beloved friend. In his loneliness, her affection touched him deeply, and he took her hand in his with fatherly tenderness.

"Come—take me to your grandfather now, and show me more of this beautiful home of yours."

"But where are Clara and Grandmamma?" asked Heidi, looking wonderingly down the path.

"Ah—now I have to tell you something that will make you sad," said the doctor, regretfully. "I have come alone, Heidi. Clara has been ill again, and was not strong enough for the journey, and so the Grandmamma did not come either. But I will promise you that in the spring when the weather is warm and the days are longer, they will surely visit you."

Poor Heidi was bitterly disappointed; it seemed quite unbelievable that all her hopes should have been so cruelly dashed, and for several moments she stood perfectly still without a word to say. Then she realized suddenly that her old friend was standing beside her on the mountain path, and that in the confusion of her thoughts she had forgotten all about him. She looked

up into his face, and for the first time saw the sadness in the kind eyes that had never clouded them before. It went straight to her heart, for Heidi could not bear to see anyone unhappy, least of all the good doctor; and, supposing that he was grieved because of her disappointment, she quickly tried to hide it.

"Oh, but it won't be a very long time before spring comes," she said, cheerfully, as she took his hand again. "Then they can stay with us longer than they could if they came now, and Clara will like that. Now let's go to Grandfather."

And soon she was consoled by her own cheerful words, so that when she saw her grandfather, she called to him quite brightly:

"The others aren't here, but in a little while they will be able to come, too!"

Heidi spoke so often about the doctor that he was not in the least a stranger to the Alm-Uncle, and the old man shook his guest's hand, and welcomed him warmly. Then all three sat down on the bench to chat, the doctor making room for Heidi between himself and her grandfather.

When he had explained the reasons for his visit, he whispered in Heidi's ear that he had brought a fine surprise for her from Frankfort, which would arrive very soon, and while Heidi was trying to guess what it could be, and vainly coaxing the doctor to tell her, the Alm-Uncle was considering what arrangements could be made so that their guest could enjoy his Alpine visit to the full.

Unfortunately, the hut offered no accommodations for a visitor, but he suggested that the doctor take a room in Dorfli, in the little inn where he would find simple comfort and perfect orderliness. From there he could come up to the Alm every day.

The grandfather added that he would be very glad to act as a guide for his guest, and that he would take him up on the mountains and show him everything that he might care to see.

This plan, which pleased the doctor very much, was agreed on.

Meanwhile, the sun had reached the zenith; the wind had died down, and the warm stillness of noonday lay upon the Alm. The grandfather rose, went into the hut, and returned presently, carrying the wooden table which he set down in front of the bench.

"Now, Heidi," said he, "fetch what we need. If the doctor will excuse our simple fare, he will be good enough to lunch with us."

"Indeed, I accept your invitation very gladly. The simplest fare must taste delicious up here," replied the doctor, as he gazed out over the sunlit valley.

Heidi, delighted to be able to wait upon her friend, ran to and fro, bringing cups and plates and spoons from the cupboard, while the Alm-Uncle toasted the cheese, and filled the milk pitcher to the brim. Then, when he had cut several slices of the meat that he cured himself in the pure mountain air, they all sat down to a meal which the doctor vowed was the best he had ever eaten in his life.

"Our Clara must certainly come to the Alm," he said. "Here she will regain her health in a little while, and will grow round and rosy, as she has never been in her life, poor child."

At that moment Heidi spied a man toiling up the path with a huge box on his shoulder. As soon as he reached the Alm, he flung his burden on the ground, and drew a deep breath.

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed the doctor, rising. "Here we are, Heidi! Come and have a look at what I brought from Frankfort." And he quickly cut the ropes that were tied around the box. Then with a wave of his hand, he bade her investigate its contents for herself.

As one gift after another came to light, Heidi's eyes grew big with wonder; but when at length she found the delicious coffee cake that had been sent to Granny, she could not contain herself for joy.

She wanted to take Granny her splendid presents immediately, but the Alm-Uncle persuaded her to wait until evening when they would all go down to visit Granny together. He himself was tremendously pleased with his package of tobacco, and when he and the doctor had filled their pipes, they settled down on the bench to wrap themselves in clouds of smoke and to talk together like old friends. Presently Heidi left her treasures, and walking over to them announced quaintly:

"But none of my presents have made me as happy as to see the good doctor again." At this, both men laughed, and the recipient of the compliment observed

that he would not have flattered himself that it was possible.

When the sun was beginning to descend behind the mountains, the doctor rose, saying that he thought it time to return to Dorfli to make his arrangements at the inn. So the Alm-Uncle packed up the coffee cake, and the sausage and the shawl, and all three set out together, Heidi clinging affectionately to the doctor's hand.

It was agreed that she should take the presents to Granny herself, while the Alm-Uncle accompanied his guest down to the village; and, accordingly, when they had reached the goatherd's hut, Heidi stopped to bid the doctor good-night.

"Will you go up to the pastures to-morrow with Peter and me?" she asked eagerly; for a day on the mountain in company with Peter and the goats was the greatest pleasure she could think of.

"By all means!" the doctor assented heartily. "We shall go together."

The Alm-Uncle set the presents down on the doorstep, and left Heidi to take them into the hut. She carried them in one by one, first appearing with the big box of cake, then with the giant sausage, and lastly with the shawl, which she laid across Granny's knees.

"There!" she cried, clapping her hands. "They all came from Frankfort, from Clara and Grandmamma!"

Brigida stood open-mouthed, and Granny stroked and patted the wonderful shawl, whispering in her delighted amazement:

"Oh, but it is so fine for the cold weather! It's finer

than anything I ever dreamed of! What kind, good people!"

"But feel how fresh and good the cake is, Granny!"

"Oh, I do—I do! Indeed those are kind and generous hearts!"

Brigida was still staring at the sausage, which was so much bigger than any sausage she had ever seen in her life that it inspired her with positive respect.

"I must ask the Uncle what it is meant for," she remarked, presently, in an awed tone.

"Why, it's meant to be eaten, of course!" cried Heidi.

Just then, Peter came clattering in.

"The Alm-Uncle is coming to ——" then his eye fell upon the sausage, and the sight of the monster delicacy robbed him of his limited powers of speech. But Heidi, who heard Grandfather's step, guessed what he was going to say, and took Granny's hand to bid her good-night.

Usually the Alm-Uncle came in for a friendly chat with Peter and the two women, but to-day it was late, and Heidi had to be up with the sun the next morning to go to the pastures, so instead of entering, he simply called a good-night to them from the doorway, and told Heidi that it was almost time for bed.

Then, hand in hand, they set out beneath the starry sky up the path to the hut.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A RECOMPENSE

EARLY the next morning, the doctor set out from Dorfli toward the Alm in company with Peter and his goats. Once or twice on the way the friendly gentleman had attempted a casual conversation with his companion, but with small success. Peter was not given to ready speech, and the doctor's questions elicited only the briefest of answers. Thus, in almost total silence they climbed up to the Alm, where Heidi and the two goats were waiting for them, all three as gay and lively as grasshoppers.

"Coming with us?" demanded Peter.

"Of course I'll go with the doctor," replied Heidi; whereupon, out of the corners of his eyes, Peter cast a singularly fierce and threatening glance at the unsuspecting visitor.

The Alm-Uncle came out of the hut bringing a sack of provisions for the midday meal, which, when he had bidden the doctor a hearty good-morning, he hung on Peter's shoulder. The youth's face brightened, and now a broad grin of pleasant anticipation stretched his mouth from ear to ear; for the sack was heavier than usual, and he had an agreeable suspicion that some unwonted delicacy had been added to the regular menu of bread and cheese.

When everything was ready, the party gaily started

off; but this morning Heidi would not let the goats crowd around her as they usually did.

"You must run on ahead," she commanded them, gravely, "and let me walk with the doctor." She switched the timid Snowhopper lightly with a little stick, to make even this favorite leave her to give her undivided attention to her friend.

The doctor did not find it difficult to talk to Heidi. Indeed, the little girl had so much to tell him about the goats and the mountain cliffs and the birds and flowers, that before he knew it they had reached the pastures. Here Heidi led him to the prettiest spot, and they sat down side by side to rest. From time to time, Master Peter favored the doctor with so black a look that, if he had seen, the good gentleman might well have been terrified, but fortunately, he was quite unaware of the little goatherd's jealousy.

The gentle morning wind swayed the harebells, the last that remained of the summer's wealth of flowers. Overhead the eagle hovered. To-day he did not screech, but on outstretched wings soared in great circles through the clear blue sky. Heidi's eyes shone with delight. Then she looked inquiringly at her companion to see if he too were enthralled by the beauty of the scene. He was looking about him, without saying anything, but when he met her questioning gaze, he answered it with feeling.

"Yes, Heidi—it *is* beautiful. But—if one's heart is heavy, how can he make it light so that he can enjoy all this loveliness to the full?"

"Oh, but one's heart is never heavy when one is here," replied Heidi. "It is only in Frankfort that one is sad."

The doctor smiled a little.

"But suppose one has brought his sadness with him from Frankfort? Can you tell me what will help him then, Heidi?"

"God will help him, if he tells Him everything and asks Him to let him be happy," said Heidi with simple conviction.

"Yes—that is true, Heidi, and it is a good thought. But suppose that it was God Himself who sent the sadness—what then shall one say to Him?"

Heidi thought for a moment. She was quite sure that the good God would help anyone who asked Him to. Then presently she found the answer in the memory of her own past experience.

"Then one must wait," she said seriously, "and say to himself, 'The good God knows how to make happy things come from sad things; and one must not turn away from Him.' If he just waits, and does not forget Him he will see that God had something good in His mind all the time. When one is unhappy he thinks that he will always be so, but that is because one can never know what God is going to bring about."

When she had finished speaking, the doctor said gravely:

"That is a beautiful thought, Heidi—never lose it." And then he sat for a time gazing at the mighty cliffs above them.

"But you know, Heidi," he went on, presently, "one

may sit here who has a shadow in his own eyes, so that he cannot see all this beauty that lies round about him. Then his heart is doubly sad because he knows that there are lovely things near him that he cannot see. Do you understand me?"

Heidi felt a sudden stab of pain at her heart. The "shadow" that the doctor spoke of made her think of Granny who would never be able to see the bright sun again, and this thought always awakened in the little girl the keenest grief. For a little while all her joy had fled, and she said nothing. Then suddenly her face brightened.

"Yes, I understand that very well," she said earnestly, "but I know that then one must sing one of the songs that I read to Granny. For she says that they make the darkness go, and one grows happy again."

"What songs do you mean, my child?" asked the doctor.

"There is one about the Sun, and the beautiful Garden, and another one that I know by heart because Granny likes to hear it so often."

"Then will you say it to me? I should like to hear it, too."

Heidi folded her hands, and after a little pause began to repeat the verses that had so often comforted the poor blind woman. The doctor listened attentively, but when she had finished he said nothing. He was sitting with his hand over his eyes, so still that Heidi thought he might have fallen asleep.

But he was not asleep. The beautiful old hymn had

carried him far away and it seemed to him that he was a boy again, standing near his mother's chair; her arm was around him, and she was singing to him the song that Heidi was repeating—a song that he had never heard since in all these long years. Once more he heard his mother's voice and saw the gentle eyes that looked so lovingly upon him.

At length, he raised his head, and met Heidi's wondering, troubled look.

"Heidi, your song was beautiful," he said, taking her hand in his own. "We shall come here often, and you will sing it to me again."

Meanwhile, Master Peter had been doing everything he could think of to show the deep indignation and rage that Heidi's conduct had roused in him. It had been days since she had come with him to the pastures and now that she was here again at last, the old doctor sat with her the whole time so that Peter could not come near her. He was furious. He sat himself down at a little distance from them, and vented his feelings by shaking his fists at the doctor's back.

Suddenly, he sprang up, and shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Time to eat!"

But the doctor declared that he was not hungry. All that he wanted was a cup of milk, after which he would like to walk about a little and explore the mountain. Heidi said that she, too, only wanted a cup of milk, and she would go with the doctor to show him the big moss-covered boulders on the summit where once the too

venturesome Thistlefinch had nearly come to an untimely end.

"But who'll eat what's in the sack?" inquired Peter, astounded at such indifference to food.

"You can have it. But first hurry and milk Little Swan."

Peter had never milked the little goat so quickly in his life. The prospect of enjoying the contents of that well-filled sack all by himself was almost too good to be true, and his haste was stimulated by the fear that something might interfere with this marvellous piece of good fortune.

When Heidi and the doctor had drunk their milk, and started off on their walk, the boy opened the sack, and peered into it. Then he looked again, to make sure that his eyes had not deceived him. The sight of the dried meat and bread and cheese in such, to him, fabulous quantities made him tremble with greedy joy. He thrust his hand into the sack to draw forth the prize. But suddenly, checked by an unwonted qualm of conscience, he withdrew his hand. Only a little while before he had been shaking a vicious fist at the very person to whom he was partially indebted for this princely meal. Quite overcome by remorse, he meditated a moment or two, not knowing just how he could make amends for an injury that its recipient had never been aware of. All at once, he sprang up, and marching over to the very spot where he had been sitting in his rage, raised both hands with open palms high in the air. This gesture was meant to indicate that his hard feelings had

vanished, and when he had maintained the attitude for what he considered a proper length of time, he trotted back to the sack, and fell to with the lusty appetite of one at peace with the world.

Heidi and her companion wandered about the mountain until the doctor felt that it was time for him to start back toward Dorfli. He thought that Heidi might prefer to stay with Peter and the goats a little longer; but she would not hear of his going all the way down the mountain alone. At least, she said, she would walk with him as far as the Alm; but when they had reached the hut, she decided to go with him still a little further. So hand in hand they continued on their way. Heidi could point out all the places where the pasturage was sweetest, and where, in summer, the golden rock-roses grew thickest, and she knew the names of all the mountain flowers, for her grandfather had taught them to her. But at last she had to turn back for twilight was falling.

The doctor started on alone on the path toward Dorfli; but after a moment or two, he looked back. Heidi was standing, watching him, and he saw her wave her hand —just as his own little daughter used to wave to him when he went away from home.

Every day, throughout that fresh, sunny autumn month, the doctor climbed the mountain to the hut. Often the Alm-Uncle, acting as a guide, would take him far up to the rocky summits where the eagles built their nests, and the giant pine-trees stretched their branches out over the deep mountain chasms. In these trips with

the Alm-Uncle the doctor found instruction as well as pleasure; for the old man's knowledge of the mountains and of everything that grew and lived upon them was astonishing. He could name every tree and every plant that sprang from the hardy Alpine soil; he knew the ways of all the animals, great and small, that made their homes in holes, or tree-tops, or rocky caves. And when the doctor had passed the day with him he often said as he shook his hand at parting:

"My friend, I never leave you without having learned something new and useful."

But when the weather was especially fine, the doctor usually went with Heidi up to the pastures; and while they sat on the grassy bank overlooking the valley, Heidi would sing him the songs that he loved to hear. Peter always sat at a distance from them, but he was in a better temper now, and never shook his fists at the doctor any more.

Thus the month of September sped by. At last the time came for the doctor to return to Frankfort.

The thought of leaving his Alpine friends made him very sad, nor were they more willing to see him go than he to leave them. He had made fast friends with the Alm-Uncle, and Heidi had become so used to seeing her dear doctor every day that she could hardly bear the thought of losing him. But it was impossible for him to stay longer.

When, on the day of his departure, he had bidden the Alm-Uncle good-bye, he asked Heidi to go with him down the mountain a little way; and the child, still hardly able

to believe that she was really going to lose this dear comrade, clung to his side until they had to part.

For a moment or two he lingered.

"Now I must go, my child," he said wistfully, tenderly stroking the curly head. "If only I could take you back to Frankfort with me, and keep you always!"

These words brought to Heidi's mind the remembrance of the stiff rows of houses, the long stony streets, severe Miss Rottenmeier and the ill-humored Tinette; and looking up at him, she said hesitatingly:

"I would rather have you come back and live with us."

"Of course. That *would* be better," said the doctor, quickly, and he took her hand in farewell. "Now—good-bye, my little Heidi." The child saw his eyes fill with tears; then he turned and walked briskly down the path.

She stood quite still where he had left her, gazing at his retreating figure; the sight of his tears had given her a pang. And suddenly she began to sob.

"Doctor! Doctor!" she cried, and when it seemed that he did not hear her, she began to run after him as hard as she could.

"Dear doctor!"

He stopped and turned, and the child with the tears streaming over her cheeks flung herself into his arms, sobbing, "I will go with you to Frankfort, and I'll stay with you as long as you want me to. But first let me go and see Grandfather again."

"No, no, my dearest little girl," exclaimed the doctor

as he caressed her tenderly. "I don't mean that you should come with me right away. You must live here with your mountains and your pine-trees, because I don't want you to be ill again. But let me ask you just this one thing: if I should ever fall ill myself, will you come and stay with me for a little while? Can I feel that there is really someone who would care what happened to me?"

"Oh, indeed, indeed I will come—on the very day you send for me!" cried Heidi fervently. "And I love you almost as much as I love Grandfather!"

She stood on the path, waving her hand until he could no longer see her; and when he took his last look at the little figure standing on the sunny mountain slope, he said to himself:

"Truly, there one can find fresh strength of soul as well as of body—and with it a new hope and joy in life."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE WINTER IN DORFLI

WINTER had come. Around the hut on the Alm the snow lay so deep that the windows looked as if they stood on a level with the ground, and the door had disappeared altogether. From a little distance below the hut was completely hidden by the great banks of snow which the winds had heaped against it. If the Alm-Uncle had been living there this winter with Heidi he would have had the same task that Peter now had to perform every morning at the goatherd's hut, when he came out to find the fresh snow that fell over night lying deep around his cottage. Every day, Peter had to crawl out through the kitchen window, and,—unless it had been so cold that everything was frozen solid—he would sink down into the drifts, so that he had to use hands and feet to push and kick his way out. Then Brigida would hand the broom to him through the window and he would set to work to clear a path to the door. It was a difficult task; but if the snow were allowed to pile up, there was danger of the door giving way under the pressure, and the whole mass descending into the kitchen. On the mornings when it had frozen, it formed an impenetrable wall, penning the inmates into the cottage. Peter alone was not too large to creep in and out through the window. But the bitter weather on the Alp had its good points as well as its bad. For instance, when Peter

had to go down to Dorfli, all he had to do was to hop on his sled and go flying down the mountain, for the surface of the snow was as smooth and firm as glass.

The Alm-Uncle, however, had kept his word to the Pastor; and as soon as the first snow had fallen he had locked up the hut and the shed, and gone down to Dorfli with Heidi and his goats.

In the village, not far from the parish house, stood an old rambling dwelling, which in former times had been a handsome manor house, but was now fallen into a state of utter dilapidation. Originally it had been built and owned by a gallant soldier, who, having gained great renown for bravery during his service in the Spanish army, had finally retired with great riches, intending to pass the rest of his days in the stately old house, in ease and tranquillity. But before long the monotonous peace of village life had begun to weary him; he could not live happily away from the bustle and struggle of the world; and at length he had departed from Dorfli, never to return.

The house had gradually fallen to ruins, and no one had lived in it but a few poor families who had never made any attempt to restore it. Most of the time it was deserted, for the winters in Dorfli were long and cold, and unless one knew how to stop up the cracks and crevices in the walls, the bitter winds would soon freeze anyone who attempted to live there.

But the Alm-Uncle knew how to help himself. Years ago, he had occupied the old ruins when he had first come to the village with his son, Tobias; and since the

early autumn he had been going down to Dorfli from time to time, gradually finishing all the necessary repairs. Then, in the middle of October, he had taken Heidi down to her new winter home.

Upon entering the house from the back, one found oneself in a large apartment that had apparently been a chapel. Its walls had entirely collapsed, but enough of the masonry was left standing to support the skeleton of an arched window. The glass had long since been broken, but the framework was preserved, and the thick ivy vines, entwined about the lattice, braced it to the crumbling roof. From this room, to which there was no door, one passed on into a broad hall, where the traces of former grandeur were still visible; but the coarse grass had grown up between the cracks of the handsome stone floor, half of the roof had disappeared completely, and, if the remnants of it had not been propped with stout beams, there would have been no reason why the rest should not have tumbled down at any moment upon the head of anyone who stood beneath.

The Alm-Uncle had strewn the floor thickly with fresh straw, and had thus fitted up the hall as a winter stable for his goats.

A series of corridors, mostly in a similar state of dilapidation, led at last to a sturdy oaken door, that still stood firmly on its hinges, shutting off the large room which the old man had chosen for his winter dwelling. Here the walls were solid, and panelled half-way up with dark wainscoting. A giant stove in one corner filled the apartment with warmth. It was a remarkable stove,

almost as high as the room itself, and set with white tiles, on which were painted, in blue, a series of pictures that instantly attracted Heidi's eye. One picture showed a pair of ancient towers, surrounded by huge blue trees, beneath which roamed a hunter and his dogs. Another represented a fisherman sitting on a shady bank, holding his rod patiently over an untroubled pond. Heidi found that the circular bench, surrounding the stove, was a great convenience for viewing the pictures in succession, and she had slid around on it to the very back of the stove, when a new object of interest caught her attention. In the space between the stove and the wall, the Alm-Uncle had put up a broad shelf, piled it thickly with fresh hay, and covered it over with a warm counterpane, so that it formed a bed for Heidi, just like the one she had at the hut.

"Oh, here is *my* room, Grandfather! How lovely it is!" cried Heidi delightedly. "But where will you sleep?"

"I'll show you. You must be near the stove, you see, so that you won't freeze."

Then he opened a second door, and showed her a tiny antechamber, where his cot stood. Beyond this, still another door led into a huge kitchen—bigger than any kitchen Heidi had ever seen in her life. The Alm-Uncle had found it very difficult to repair this dilapidated room, and there was still much work to be done on it; for the walls had split and crumbled away on all sides, and the wind whistled through them. But he had reinforced them with heavy boards and stout wire nettings,

and repaired the big door so that it could be closely shut. Beyond this room, the rest of the building lay in hopeless ruins, overgrown by tangled shrubbery where lizards and all kinds of insects made their nests.

Heidi was enchanted with her new home, and by the time Peter arrived next day to see how things were going, she had explored every nook and cranny, so that she was able to show him every point of interest.

She slept as soundly in her bed behind the stove as on the Alm, but in the morning, when she wakened, the silence puzzled her; and for a long time her first thought was that the snow weighed the boughs of the trees down, so that they could not rustle. Often, missing the familiar music of the pines, she longed to be back on the mountain; but as soon as she heard her grandfather's voice, and the bleating of the two little goats, she felt that she was at home, after all, and sprang merrily out of bed.

When several days had passed, Heidi said to her grandfather:

"Now I must go up to see Granny again. She must not be left alone any longer."

But at this the old man shook his head.

"Not to-day, child. The snow is fathoms deep on the Alp, and it is still falling. Even Peter can hardly get through, and a little one like you would be buried so deep in it that you couldn't be found! Wait a little—until it freezes over. Then you can walk quite easily on the crust."

Heidi was disappointed at not being able to go to

Granny at once, but her days were so full now that one had gone and another had come before she knew it. Every morning and afternoon she went to school, where she studied her lessons eagerly; but here she saw very little of Master Peter, for most of the time he did not come to school at all. The teacher, a mild-tempered man, sometimes remarked, "I see that Peter is absent again. It's a pity, because he needs to study, but no doubt the snow is too deep on the Alp for him to get through." Nevertheless, the snow was not too deep to keep this lazy Peter from coming down to see Heidi nearly every evening—when school was over.

At last the sun shone once more, but it sank early behind the glistening mountain peaks, as if it did not take so much joy in this white, frozen world as it did in the blooming summer. Then the moon rose, round and full, turning the snowfields into sheets of bright silver; and in the morning the mountains glittered as if they had been strewn with diamond dust.

Now the snow on the mountains was frozen solid, and Peter could stamp on the surface of the snow, and even strike it with his heavy shovel, without chipping off a single splinter of ice. He was delighted—now Heidi would be able to come to the cottage. Having swallowed his milk, and put a piece of bread in his pocket, he informed his mother that he was going to school.

"Yes—go, and study hard," urged Brigida. Peter climbed through the window—for now the door was tightly sealed by the ice—fetched his sled, and sped away like lightning down the mountain.

But the rogue did not even stop in Dorfli. He found this coasting so agreeable that it seemed to him a pity not to enjoy a little more of it, and accordingly, he continued on his way until the path became level, and, having carried him almost as far as Mayenfeld, the sled stopped of its own accord. Now it occurred to the youth that it would take him at least an hour to make his way back to Dorfli, and that, as he would be late for school in any event, he might as well take his time.

Acting upon this line of reasoning he reached Dorfli just at midday and Heidi had already got home from school. She was, in fact, just sitting down to lunch with her grandfather when Peter made his appearance.

"It's come," announced the youth, thus unburdening himself of the important news of the day.

"There's a report in true military style for you!" remarked the Alm-Uncle. "What's come?"

"The ice."

"Oh, goody! Now I can go to see Granny!" cried Heidi, who seemed to understand the laconic Peter without the least difficulty. "But why weren't you in school to-day, Peter? You could come down on your sled quite easily!" As she spoke she gave him a severe look, for she considered it very wrong of him not to come to school when he was able to.

"Went too far."

"That's deserting," said the Alm-Uncle sternly. "And people who desert ought to have their ears pulled. Do you hear?"

Peter was frightened, for he stood more in awe of the Alm-Uncle than of anyone in the world.

"And it's twice as shameful for a general like you to desert than for anyone else," went on the old man. "What do you do to your goats when they run away and won't go where it's best for them?"

"Beat 'em!" said Peter readily.

"And when a boy acts like a disobedient goat and gets a sound spanking for it—what would you say?"

"Serves him right!" answered the incautious Peter.

"Well, then, goat-general, just remember that the next time you go running away on your sled when you ought to be in school, you are to come to me and get what you deserve!"

Then at last the slow-witted Peter grasped the purport of the Alm-Uncle's questions, and in great alarm looked around him to see whether a switch was in readiness to mete out to him the punishment that he inflicted on his disobedient goats. But this time the old man relented.

"Well, well, come and have something to eat now, my boy," said he. "Then Heidi may go back to the cottage with you, and when you bring her back this evening you can have your supper with us."

This unexpected lenience restored Peter's cheerfulness, and with a grin of relief he sat down to his meal. Heidi had already had enough, and offered him her toasted cheese and a large potato which he graciously accepted, although the Alm-Uncle had piled his plate so generously that he was almost hidden behind it. But

Peter's appetite was equal to anything and he fell to with a stolid determination that soon dispatched the vestige of his dinner. Meanwhile Heidi had put on the warm cloak that Clara had sent her, and pulled the hood over her head. Then, as soon as Peter had swallowed his last morsel, she made him start out with her for the cottage.

While they climbed she had a great deal to tell him, particularly about Little Swan and Little Bear. The first day that they had been in their new stall, neither of them would eat, but stood sadly hanging their heads without uttering a sound. Grandfather had told her that they felt just as she had felt when she was in Frankfort; for they had never been down to Dorfli before in their lives, and were homesick for the Alm. "And some day, Peter," Heidi added seriously, "you will know what that is like."

Peter made no reply; indeed he had not spoken a single word since they left Dorfli, but seemed so deeply wrapped in thought that he hardly even heard what his companion was saying. When at length they had reached the cottage he stopped, and fixing his eyes on Heidi, said gruffly:

"I'd rather go to school than have the Uncle do what he said!"

Heidi, of course, was of the same opinion, and warmly encouraged Peter to stand by this excellent resolution.

Inside the cottage, Brigida, busy as usual with her patchwork, was sitting alone, for Granny had had to

stay in bed that day. She had not been very well, Brigida said, and suffered a great deal from the cold.

Heidi ran quickly into the other room, where, wrapped in the grey shawl, the old woman lay under the threadbare coverlet.

She had heard Heidi's step, however, and her face was bright as the child ran to her and took her hands joyfully.

"Ah, God be thanked!" she exclaimed in her trembling voice. "She has come again!"

She had been very melancholy all the autumn; for Peter had told her about the strange gentleman from Frankfort that had often come up to the pastures with Heidi, and Granny's heart had been filled with the fear that he had come to take the child away again. Even when the doctor had gone the old woman's mind was still troubled, and her fears grew more and more dark when Heidi was not able to come to her.

"Are you very ill, Granny?" the child asked anxiously, as she stood beside the sick woman.

"No, no, my dear little one. It is only that the cold has gotten into my bones—that is all."

"Would you get well right away if you were warm?"

"Yes, surely. God willing, I will soon be able to go back to my spinning-wheel. I meant to try it to-day—but to-morrow will be better."

Her words relieved Heidi, who was frightened at seeing her sick in bed for the first time. After a few moments she said:

"In Frankfort, people put on their shawls when they

go out for a walk. Did you think, Granny, that a person should wear one when she goes to bed?"

"I wear the shawl in bed so that I won't freeze, my dear. And it's a blessing to have it—for the covers are very thin."

"But, Granny, your mattress slants down under your head where it ought to be high. A bed shouldn't be like that."

The old woman felt for her pillow, which was as thin and flat as a board.

"I know, Heidi—but my pillow was never very thick, and I have slept on it now for so many years that it is quite flat."

"Oh, if only I had asked Clara to let me take my bed with me from Frankfort!" cried Heidi. "It had three big pillows—one on top of the other, so high that I couldn't go to sleep, and always tried to put my head down where it was flat. Then I'd have to go up on them again because that was how one was meant to sleep. Could you sleep better that way, Granny?"

"Yes—very well. It would be so warm, and it is easier to get one's breath when one doesn't have to lie flat. But don't let us talk about that, my dear. The good God has already given me so much to be thankful for—things that many others who are old and sick do not have. I have soft white bread to eat, and this beautiful warm shawl to cover me, and best of all I have you to come and see me, Heidi. Will you read to me again to-day?"

Heidi gladly fetched the hymn-book, and began to

read the most beautiful songs that she could find. Granny lay with her hands folded, and her face, which had been so sad, was now lit up with a quiet smile, as if a sudden joy had stolen into her heart. Heidi noticed it, and asked:

"Do you feel well again, Granny?"

"Yes, Heidi—I feel as if all were well with me again. Will you read a little more, dear child?"

Heidi began, and read another song through to the end.

"When mine eyes grow dim and sad,
Let Thy love more brightly burn
That my soul, a wanderer glad,
Safely homeward may return."

The last words awakened in Heidi the memory of that summer day when she had come back to her grandfather, and raising her head, she said softly, with shining eyes:

"Oh, I know well what it means to come home, Granny!"

The old woman did not answer, but she had heard, and the calm, happy smile again came over her blind face.

It had grown dark, for night fell quickly now, and Heidi had to go.

"I will come back soon, Granny dear, and I am so glad that you are feeling better."

The old woman took her hand and held it fast.

"Yes, I am happy again—even though I must lie here helpless in my bed, I am happy, Heidi. No one but people who are blind know how hard it is to stay alone

for days without hearing a voice, or seeing even the smallest ray of sunlight. Then sad thoughts come and one feels that one cannot bear it any longer. But the beautiful songs that you read to me, my dearest child, bring the sunlight, not into the eyes, but into the heart."

The moon had already risen when Heidi left the cottage, and shone so brightly on the spotless snow that the night was like day. Peter brought out his sled, and in a moment the two children were flying down the Alm as swiftly as two swallows.

When Heidi was warmly tucked up in her bed behind the stove, she began to think again about Granny, and her flat uncomfortable pillow, and about what she had said about the light which the songs that Heidi read brought to her heart.

"If only she could hear them every day, then she would *never* be sad."

For a long time she lay trying to invent some plan for getting up to the cottage every day to read to the poor old woman. She could not bear to think of Granny being left alone in her darkness and silence for perhaps a whole week, or even a fortnight.

At last, Heidi had a splendid idea, which so pleased her that she could hardly wait for morning to come. But suddenly she remembered that she had not said her prayers, and at once she knelt up in her bed, and with all her heart asked God to send His blessing upon Grandfather and poor blind Granny. Then, full of quiet joy and confidence, she lay down again in her warm nest, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE WINTER CONTINUES

THE next morning Peter appeared at school, carrying his lunch with him; for at midday the scholars who lived at a distance ate their lunch at the schoolhouse, while the village children went home for the hour's recess.

In the afternoon, when school was over, he went to pay his usual visit to Heidi, feeling that he had done his duty, and therefore had nothing to fear from the Alm-Uncle. Heidi was expecting him, and as soon as she heard his step, ran to meet him.

"Peter," she said, as she followed him over to the stove, "I have something to say to you."

"What?" said Peter.

"You must learn to read now."

"I've learned already."

"Pooh! I don't mean *that* way," said Heidi, scornfully, "but so that you can read to yourself."

"Never can," replied Peter, placidly.

"No one will believe you any more when you say that, and neither will I," returned Heidi. "The Grandmamma in Frankfort told me it wasn't true, and that I shouldn't believe you."

Peter was astonished.

"And now I am going to teach you to read properly.

I know how. And then you can read a song to Granny every day."

"No," growled Peter, obstinately, "I can't do it."

This stubborn resistance to what was only for his own good, as well as necessary to the plan that she cherished, angered Heidi. With flashing eyes, she burst out:

"Then I'll tell you what will happen to you if you won't learn! Your mother has already said twice that she will send you away to Frankfort, where you have to study all kinds of things. And I know very well where the boys have to go to school down there! A great big, gloomy, awful place—Clara showed it to me when we went driving. And they make you go to school not only when you're a boy, but when you're grown up, too. And they don't have just one teacher, as we do, but lots of them, all dressed in black like the Pastor, with high black hats on their heads—as high as this," Heidi held out her hand two feet above the floor. Peter felt a shiver go down his spine. "If you make a mistake, they get terribly angry, and look at you more crossly even than Tinette—I tell you, if you don't know how to read and spell properly you'll soon see how angry they get!"

Peter was at last terrified into submission.

"Well, I'll learn then," he said, sulkily.

Immediately, Heidi softened.

"Good! Then we'll begin right away!" she said eagerly, and she made Peter sit down at the table at once.

Just the day before she had remembered that in the

box Clara had sent from Frankfort there was a little book with the A B C's in it, and some simple rhymes—exactly what she needed for teaching Peter. So she got it out, and seating herself beside him, made him begin. But at the start, Peter floundered in such grave difficulties that Heidi took the book away from him, saying:

"I'll read first, and then when you know how it sounds you will understand better. Now this is the first rhyme, Peter—listen:

"If A B C you do not know
Before the school board you must go."

"I *won't* go!" said Peter, angrily.

"Where?"

"Before the school board."

"Then learn the three letters, and you won't have to."

So Peter meekly repeated the rhyme over and over until Heidi said that he knew it. Then she continued:

"Then you must learn D E F G
Or most unlucky will you be.

"Next, H I J K learn with care,
Or your bad luck's already here.

"Who over L and M doth stumble
Must pay a penance and feel humble.

"There's trouble coming—if you knew
You'd quickly learn N O P Q.

"If you can't master R S T
You'll suffer for it speedily."

Here Heidi stopped, for Peter was so quiet that she was curious to see what he could be doing. But Peter was doing nothing whatever; all the mysterious terrors that threatened him if he could not learn his alphabet had so frightened the boy that he could not move a muscle, but simply sat and stared at Heidi in abject fear. Heidi was touched, and laying her hand on his arm, said soothingly:

"You don't have to be afraid, Peter. Just be sure to come to me every evening, and you will soon know all the letters. Then nothing bad will happen to you. But you must come every day, even when it snows, and not act as you do about school."

Peter, still cowed by fear, gave Heidi a solemn promise to come to her regularly for his lessons, and then took his departure.

He was as good as his word, and thereafter appeared every evening to learn the letters and store the impressive rhymes in his memory. Often the Alm-Uncle sat by, listening while he smoked his pipe, and now and then the corners of his mouth twitched a little, as if something amused him very much. Then, after his heroic exertions, Peter was usually invited to stay to supper, which liberally compensated the boy for his hour of grim struggle.

As the winter days passed, he began to make genuine progress, although each new verse that he had to learn required a long tussle; and at last he had mastered the alphabet as far as the letter U. At this point he began to show signs of mutiny. The rhyme informed him that

'Whoever mixes U and V
Will go where he won't want to be!"

"Huh!" said Peter. "I'd like to see who'll make me!"

But he learned the rhyme, nevertheless, for way down inside him he had an uncomfortable misgiving that behind these awful threats there might really lurk some mysterious Being who *could* make him go where he would not like to go.

The next evening Heidi read:

"If W you still ignore,
Look at the rod behind the door!"

Peter threw an uneasy glance over his shoulder. Then he said, scornfully:

"There isn't any rod!"

"Oh, yes, there is!" said Heidi. "Grandfather has one in the cupboard—as thick as my arm!"

Peter's face changed. He remembered the Alm-Uncle's big staff very well, and without another word he bent over the book, and mumbled the rhyme over and over again until he was sure that he would never forget that perilous W.

"Then if the X you cannot say
No supper will you have to-day!"

"But I *can* say the X," said Peter, with a hungry glance at the shelf where the bread and cheese were kept. "So I'll have some supper, won't I?"

"Yes. And now see if you can learn the Y and the Z."

"The Y's the next to last you see,
So learn it—then, there's only Z.

"But if the Z you make with blots,
You'll be sent to the Hottentots!"

"Pooh!" jeered Peter. "Nobody knows where they are!"

"Oh, yes, indeed—Grandfather does!" retorted Heidi promptly. "Just wait and I'll ask him—he's over with the Pastor." And so saying she jumped up and ran to the door.

"Wait! Wait!" shrieked Peter in terror. He had already forgotten the letter Z, and in his mind's eye he saw the Alm-Uncle and the Pastor coming to pack him off to the Hottentots. Heidi stopped short, surprised at the anguish in his tone.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Come back, and I will learn it," vowed the unhappy Peter. Heidi, however, was really curious to know where the Hottentots lived, and wanted to go and ask her grandfather. But poor Peter implored her to stay with such earnestness that at last she gave in, and came back to her place at the table. As for Peter, the letter Z was impressed upon his memory so vividly that he never forgot it. Thus he had finally learned the whole alphabet, and when Heidi began to teach him the syllables, he went ahead with what, for slow-witted Peter, was a really surprising rapidity.

The days flew by, and fresh snows had prevented Heidi from going up to see Granny for nearly three

weeks. But during this time she had schooled Peter so energetically that he was at last able to spell out the hymns.

One night, therefore, on getting home from Dorfli, he marched into the cottage with the brief announcement:

"I can do it!"

"Do what, Peterkin?" asked his mother, looking up from her work.

"I can read," said Peter.

"Read!" cried Brigida, staring at him incredulously. "No! How can it be possible! Mother, did you hear him? Peter can read!"

Granny had heard, but she, too, was slow to believe in such a miracle.

"I'll read a hymn to you," said Peter. "Heidi said I must."

So the astonished Brigida fetched the book, and he sat down and began to give a demonstration of his new accomplishment. After every verse Brigida murmured, in amazement and delight:

"Could anyone have believed it!"

But Granny said nothing.

The next day in school when it was Peter's turn to read, the teacher looked at him doubtfully for a moment, then with a shrug of his shoulders said mildly:

"Well, Peter, shall I pass you by as usual, or do you want to try to—I won't say *read*—but to stammer through a line?"

Peter did not reply, but bending down over his book read through *three* whole lines without stopping!

The teacher put his own book aside, and dumb with astonishment, simply stared at Peter over the rims of his spectacles. At length he said:

"Well, well, well! Wonders never cease! So long as I worked with the utmost patience to teach you, you did not seem able to learn a single letter of the alphabet; and now, when I had finally given you up as hopeless, it appears that you cannot only spell out the words, but even read them quite clearly. How did this wonderful thing come about, Peter?"

"Heidi taught me," said Peter.

The teacher turned his gaze upon Heidi who sat quietly in her place as if nothing at all extraordinary had happened. Then said the schoolmaster:

"Furthermore, Peter, I have noticed that lately you have not missed a single day of school—whereas, formerly, you used to be absent for weeks at a time. Who can have been the cause of such a remarkable change in your habits?"

"The Alm-Uncle," said Peter.

The schoolmaster blinked his eyes. The Alm-Uncle—of all people!

As soon as school was over he hurried to the Pastor to inform him of the good that Heidi and her grandfather were doing in the community.

Obedient to Heidi's orders, Peter now read one of the hymns to Granny every night. But more than one he would not attempt, nor did the old woman urge him.

"I can hardly believe that Peterkin has really learned to read at last," observed Brigida one night, when the

prodigy had gone off to bed. "Indeed, there's no telling what the boy may do now!"

"It's a fine thing," Granny agreed—a little less enthusiastically. She hesitated a moment, then added timidly, "But I will be heartily glad when the good God sends the spring, and Heidi can come to us again. Somehow the hymns sound different when she reads them—often I cannot quite understand Peterkin."

It was not strange that she found Peter's rendering of the hymns a little difficult to grasp; for whenever the boy came to a word that looked too long, he would coolly skip over it, evidently being of the opinion that three or four words in a single verse were quite sufficient. Thus, when Peter read, there often seemed to be no nouns in the hymns at all!

CHAPTER TWENTY

OLD FRIENDS REAPPEAR

ONCE more the warm May sunshine lay upon the Alp; the last traces of the winter snows had melted away, and the swollen freshets foamed down the mountainsides into the valley. The slopes were green again, and, wakened by the gentle sunlight, the first flowers were opening their bright-colored eyes. A joyous spring wind rustled through the pines, shaking down the dead brown needles, so that the ancient trees could clad themselves anew in tender green; and overhead, in the clear sky, the eagle soared on motionless, outstretched wings.

Heidi had come back to the Alm, and to the child her beloved mountains seemed more beautiful than ever. From one spot to another she ran, light and joyous as a young leaf, now to spy out a favorite flower peeping up at her from the sweet-scented earth, now to watch some little insect sunning itself on a trembling blade of grass, now to listen in hushed ecstasy to the deep hum of the wind.

The Alm-Uncle was busy in his workshop behind the hut, and Heidi, hearing the familiar sound of his hammer and saw, hastened to him to see what he was making.

Near the door of the workshop stood a fine new wooden stool already finished, while the Alm-Uncle with a skillful hand was putting the last touches to a second.

"Oh, I know what they are for!" cried Heidi, with a

skip of joy. "They are for Clara and Grandmamma, when they come from Frankfort. But we'll need still another one, Grandfather—or do you think perhaps that Miss Rottenmeier won't come?"

"I can't say for sure," replied the old man. "But it will be safest to have an extra chair so that we can invite her to sit down if she *does* come."

Heidi looked thoughtfully at the neat wooden stool, wondering if the dignified governess would appreciate a chair that had no back. After a moment she remarked:

"I don't think Miss Rottenmeier will like to sit on that, Grandfather."

"Then we'll invite her to rest on a soft couch of—grass," replied the Alm-Uncle, quietly.

The arrival of Peter and the goats put an end to the discussion of Miss Rottenmeier's comfort.

The boy had a message for Heidi, and pressing his way through the boisterous flock, he pulled forth a letter, which he delivered to her with the simple comment, "There!"—leaving all further explanation to the letter itself.

"But you couldn't have found this letter up in the pastures, Peter!" laughed Heidi.

"No."

"Then where did you get it?"

"In my bread sack," was the puzzling reply. But it was no more than the simple truth. The postmaster at Dorfli had entrusted it to Peter the day before; Peter had then stowed it in his haversack along with his day's

rations of bread and cheese, but the provisions had been laid in on top of it, and although the boy had already seen Heidi when he stopped for the two goats early in the morning, he had first to consume his midday meal in order to work his way down to the letter again. That was Peter's way of doing things.

"It's from Frankfort, Grandfather!" cried Heidi. "Shall I read it to you?" Her two listeners immediately gave her their closest attention and she began:

"DEAR HEIDI:

"All our trunks are packed, and in two or three days we will start on our journey. Papa is leaving, too, but he is not coming with us right away, for he has to go to Paris first.

"The doctor cannot wait for us to start, and whenever he comes to see me, he always puts his head in at the door, and shouts, 'Away, away to the Alps!' You cannot imagine how much he enjoyed his visit to you.

"Last winter he came nearly every day to tell us about you and your grandfather, and about all the wonderful things in the mountains. And he has seemed younger and happier than he has been for a long time. He says that up in the Alps where the air is so sweet, and where one is far away from the noise of our city streets, no one can help being well and happy.

"Oh, how I long to be with you, and to see Granny and Peter and the goats at last. But the doctor wants me first to stay in Ragatz for about six weeks, to take the cure there. After that Grandmamma and I shall go to live in Dorfli, and from there I can be carried up to the Alm every day if the weather is fine. Grandmamma is delighted to think that she is going to see you again.

But Miss Rottenmeier will stay at home. Grandmamma often asks her, 'What about the trip to Switzerland, my good Rottenmeier?' but she always says, 'No, thank you,' in a very dignified way. Sebastian frightened her dreadfully with his description of the mountains—all awful cliffs and precipices where one has to climb at the risk of one's life. Tinette is afraid to come, too. So there will just be Grandmamma and I—though Sebastian is going with us as far as Ragatz.

"I can hardly wait to see you again, dear Heidi. Grandmamma sends you her love.

"Always your true friend,

"CLARA."

Hardly had Heidi finished reading this letter, than Peter, swinging his rod right and left so that the goats fled before him in terror, made off down the mountain as if he were pursued by a fiend. The letter that brought Heidi so much joy had filled the little goatherd with fear and rage.

The next day Heidi went down to share the delightful news with Granny, in whom every event of Heidi's life awakened a sympathy of feeling so deep that it seemed to be a part of her own.

The old woman was back again at her spinning-wheel; but although she was better in health than she had been during the winter, her face was troubled. From Peter's confused report she had gathered that a vast number of people were coming up to the mountains from Frankfort, whose purpose he could not explain. And the old woman, tormented by the fear that they were coming

to take Heidi away again, now that she had regained her health, had passed a worried and sleepless night.

She listened to Heidi's story in silence, and at length the child, puzzled by the old woman's downcast looks, laid her hand on Granny's knee and asked anxiously:

"What is it, Granny? Aren't you glad, too?"

"Yes, yes—of course, child!" Granny responded, trying to force a cheerful smile. "It always gives me joy to see *you* happy."

"But I know that something troubles you," Heidi insisted. "Are you thinking that perhaps Miss Rottenmeier will come?"

"No, no—it's nothing—nothing at all, dear child. Just give me your little hand so that I can be sure that you are still with me."

Heidi said no more, and after a little she brought the old hymn-book and read to Granny until the afternoon had worn away, and it was time for her to start back to the hut. The simple—often clumsy—verses restored the old woman's patient cheerfulness, and by the time Heidi rose to go the sadness in her face had given place to a calm smile, bright with confidence in the justice and mercy of God, and of serene submission to His will.

May had slipped away, and a golden June, with a wealth of flowers that burdened the warm winds with their fragrance, was nearly gone when Heidi, coming forth from the hut one morning, beheld a strange procession making its way up the mountain path.

First came two men, carrying between them a kind of

open sedan chair, in which was seated a fair-haired girl, wrapped in shawls and rugs. Next came a horse mounted by a stately lady who displayed a most vivacious interest in everything about her, and chattered away merrily to the youth who held the bridle. Behind her marched still another villager pushing a rolling-chair, and last of all came a porter, laden down with a mountain of shawls and rugs and furs that towered high above his head.

"Grandfather! Grandfather!" shrieked Heidi.

The Alm-Uncle rushed out of his workshop to see what was the matter.

"They are here! They are really, really here!" Heidi shouted jubilantly, and, as the two porters gently set down the sedan chair, she rushed to greet her friends—first Clara, then Grandmamma Sesemann, who had descended from her steed as nimbly as a girl, and was already speaking to the Alm-Uncle as if he were an old acquaintance.

"My dear Uncle—what splendid dominions you have!" she exclaimed gaily. "Why, a king would envy you! And Heidi looks as pink as a rose! Now, little Clara,—what have you to say to *this,* my dear?"

Clara's blue eyes were shining with delight—in all her life she had never known, or dreamed, of such beauty.

"Oh, I can't *believe* it, Grandmamma! It's too lovely! If only I could stay up here!"

The Alm-Uncle, who had been helping the porters to dispose of their various burdens, now came over to Mrs. Sesemann.

"I think that it might be better for the little daughter to be moved to the rolling-chair," he said; "the sedan is rather hard and stiff,"—and without another word, he lifted Clara gently in his strong arms, and transferred her to the rolling-chair, tucking her up in her rugs as gently as if he had been accustomed to taking care of invalids all his life.

Mrs. Sesemann watched him with the utmost amazement.

"If I knew where you had learned to take care of sick people so well, Uncle," she observed, "I'd send all the nurses I know of to the same school. How do you happen to be so skillful?"

The Alm-Uncle smiled.

"I learned by experience more than by study, madam," he replied, and as he spoke his smile faded into an expression of sadness. Before his eyes had risen the picture of a man stretched helpless and suffering in an invalid's chair, powerless to move hand or foot. It was that of his old captain, whom he himself had carried, mortally wounded, from a battlefield in Sicily, and had cared for through long months of agony that had ended only in the gallant soldier's death. That had been the school where his strong, rough hands had learned to be so gentle.

The sky stretched dark-blue and cloudless above the hut and the fir-trees; in the distance towered the grey crags, capped with snow. Clara could not drink her fill of the beauty of the varied scenes that lay about her.

"Oh, Heidi—if only I could get up and run with you

—around the hut, and there under the trees. If only I could go and look at all the things I know so much about and have never seen!"

Without a word, Heidi took the handle of the chair, and pushed with all her might. The chair rolled smoothly over the dry grass until Heidi stopped it near the edge of the cliff beneath the pines. Never in her life had Clara seen anything like those giant trees, and Mrs. Sesemann, who had followed the two children, stood contemplating them with equal wonder; hardly knowing which was the more impressive,—their dense tops, towering up toward the blue sky; or the great, sturdy trunks, which could have told the history of so many bygone years, during which they had stood there on the cliff far, far above the valley. Down below, generations of human beings had lived and died, but they alone had stood eternal and unchanged.

Heidi now carried the tour of inspection around to the goats' stall; but unfortunately the inmates were not at home.

"Grandmamma, can't I wait up here until Little Swan and Little Bear get back from the pastures?" Clara begged. "I do so want to see all the goats, and Peter. It would be a pity to go back to Dorfli as early as you said."

"Now, now, dear child," said Mrs. Sesemann, "let's enjoy all the lovely things we *can* see, and not fret about the things we can't."

Heidi pushed the chair farther on.

"Oh-h-h!" cried Clara, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"Did anyone ever see such flowers! Whole bushes of little red blossoms! And only look at the bluebells!"

Heidi promptly broke off a branch from one of the flowering shrubs and laid it in Clara's lap.

"But those are nothing!" she assured her friend eagerly. "Just wait until you can come up to the pastures with Peter and me! Then you will see more flowers than you ever dreamed of. In one place there are millions more bluebells and bushes of red centauries than we have here—and yellow meadow roses that make the ground look as if it were covered with gold! And there are flowers with great big leaves—Grandfather says they are called Heliopsis—and the brown flowers with little round heads that smell so good! Oh, when you see how beautiful it is in the pastures you will *never* want to leave them!"

"Grandmamma, do you think I can ever go with Peter and Heidi?" cried Clara wistfully.

"I can *wheel* you up to the pastures!" declared Heidi, and in her eagerness to show how easily this feat could be performed, she gave the chair such an energetic push that it very nearly went flying down the mountain. Fortunately the Alm-Uncle was near at hand, and caught it in time to avert disaster.

He had been busy while Heidi had been taking her guests sight-seeing, and the table was standing by the bench already spread with various good things for the open-air luncheon.

Grandmamma was perfectly charmed with this "dining-room"—from which one could see down into the

valley below, and into the blue sky arching above the mountains. A gentle wind, rustling through the pine-trees, filled the air with a low music, as sweet as any that had ever accompanied a princely feast.

"Never," declared Grandmamma, "never have I enjoyed anything as much as this! Clara! Do my eyes deceive me—or is that really a *second* piece of toasted cheese that you are eating?"

"It tastes *so* good, Grandmamma," explained Clara, on whose plate there lay, sure enough, a second slice of golden cheese. "Much, much better than anything I ate at Ragatz." And with that she took a hearty mouthful with unmistakable relish.

"Brave!" said the Alm-Uncle, well pleased. "Our mountain air makes up for the failings of the cook."

The jolly meal went on. Mrs. Sesemann and the Alm-Uncle had taken a great liking to one another, and chatted away like old friends. Their conversation grew ever more and more lively. They talked of everything—of men, of things, of the progress of the world in general—and their opinions on all subjects agreed wonderfully. Time slipped by without anyone observing that the afternoon was waning, until Mrs. Sesemann happened to glance toward the west.

"Why! The sun is already going down!" she exclaimed. "Clara, we'll have to get ready to go in a moment or two, for our people will soon be here with my horse and the chair."

"Oh, can't we stay just one or two hours more, Grandmamma!" begged Clara, turning a coaxing face toward

the old lady. "We haven't been inside the hut yet to see Heidi's bed, and all the things she told me about. If only the day were ten hours longer!"

"But sad to say, it isn't!" laughed Grandmamma; nevertheless she was, herself, curious to look at the interior of the hut, and they all rose to go inside.

The door was too narrow for the rolling-chair to pass through; but the Alm-Uncle lifted Clara in his arms and carried her safely and easily into his dwelling.

Mrs. Sesemann trotted about, amused and interested by the quaint furnishings, and admiring with the eye of a practised housekeeper the trimness and perfect order that reigned everywhere she looked.

"And your bed is up there in the loft, isn't it, Heidi?" said she. With that she climbed up the ladder as nimbly as a sailor, and peered about her. "How deliciously the hay smells! It must be a healthful sleeping room!"

The Alm-Uncle, carrying Clara, had followed the old lady, and Heidi clambered up behind him, so that all three were now standing around Heidi's neatly made hay bed. Mrs. Sesemann contemplated it thoughtfully, now and then drawing in deep breaths of the spicy fragrance. Clara was enchanted.

"Oh, Heidi, how lovely! You can see right into the sky from your bed, can't you? How wonderful it must be to lie here with this delicious scent all around you, and listen to the pine-trees rustling outside your little window! Never, *never* have I seen such a nice bedroom!"

The Alm-Uncle exchanged a glance with Mrs. Sesemann.

"I have a plan in mind," said he, "and I hope that Mrs. Sesemann will not oppose it. I mean to say, that if we could keep the little daughter up here for a time I am sure that she would get much stronger. We can make a fine, soft bed for her with all the shawls and covers that she has brought with her, and Mrs. Sesemann can be sure that I will take the very best care of her."

Heidi and Clara, of course, were beside themselves with delight at this proposal, and Mrs. Sesemann's face beamed with satisfaction.

"My dear Uncle, you are a most remarkable man!" she declared. "How could you have guessed my very thoughts? I was just saying to myself, 'Would it not be a splendid thing for the child to stay up here for a time where she can breathe this pure, delicious air?'—But the duties, the cares, the discomfort that it would bring to her good host!—And yet you speak of it as if it would be no trouble to you at all! Let me thank you, my dear Uncle, from the very bottom of my heart!" And she shook his hand again and again, while his face grew bright with pleasure.

Without losing a moment in his preparations, he now carried Clara back to her chair in front of the hut, and left her there with Heidi, who could only prance and squeal with joy. Then he loaded his arms with the shawls and furs.

"It was lucky that Mrs. Sesemann brought all these

things as if she were prepared for a winter campaign," he said, laughing. "We can make good use of them."

"My dear Uncle—foresight is an excellent virtue, and wards off many a discomfort! If one can make a journey over your mountains without encountering storms and winds and cloudbursts, he can congratulate himself. And, as you say, my wraps have come in very usefully after all."

Then they both climbed up to the loft again, and began to make Heidi's bed wider with armfuls of hay, covering it with the shawls until it looked like a small fortress. Not a single wisp of straw escaped Mrs. Sesemann's keen and housewifely eye, and the bed was as trim and smooth as even her exacting heart could wish.

The two children, meanwhile, were deep in plans for enjoying every moment of the time that they should be together, and with shining faces heard from the older people what had been decided. Clara was to stay up on the Alm for at least a month—that length of time being, in the Alm-Uncle's opinion, a fair test of the benefits which mountain life could bring to the little invalid.

And now the porters from Dorfli had appeared, and it was time for Mrs. Sesemann to go back.

"But it isn't good-bye, Grandmamma," cried Clara as the old lady mounted her steed. "You will come to see us often, won't you? We'll have so much to tell you, and it will all be so much fun!"

Mrs. Sesemann had no intention of living by herself down in the little mountain village; her plan was to return to Ragatz; but she promised that from there she

would make frequent trips to the Alm to see her granddaughter, and gaily assured the children that she would want frequent and full accounts of all their doings. The Alm-Uncle now took the bridle of her horse, and in spite of the old lady's protestations, gallantly insisted on conducting her himself down the steep mountain path to Dorfli.

Before very long, Clara's eager wish to see Peter and the goats was fulfilled. Even before the Alm-Uncle had returned from the village, the whole herd arrived at the hut, and the visitor was formally introduced to each and every one of the goats, from affectionate little Snowhopper to the rough and bullying Turk.

Peter, however, stood sullenly aside, and his round eyes were fixed upon Clara with a gaze that was both gloomy and wrathful; nor, when the two children called a cheerful good-night to him as he started away with his flock, would he return any answer, but whirled his staff around his head so violently that it nearly snapped in two.

The day, so wonderfully eventful, at last drew to a close. Bedtime came, and the two children now lay side by side on the soft hay, gazing through the round window into the starlit sky.

"It's as if we were going right up into Heaven, Heidi," murmured Clara with a sigh of deep happiness. "How beautiful the stars are!"

"Yes—and do you know what I think makes them twinkle so joyfully up there?"

"No. What is it?"

"They are dancing for happiness because they are up in Heaven and can see how the good God looks after us all so that we need never be afraid. See how they sparkle, Clara!"

Long after Heidi had fallen asleep with her arms curled around her black head, Clara lay wide awake, looking at the stars. Never in the city had she seen them shining so clearly and brightly in the dark night sky. And every time she shut her eyes, she felt that she must open them again for one last look—until at last she, too, dropped softly to sleep, and in her dreams saw the bright stars still peacefully shining down.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FURTHER EVENTS ON THE ALPS

EARLY the next morning, when the first beams of the sun were stealing into the valley, the Alm-Uncle, who had already been out to make his usual forecast of the weather, climbed up the ladder to the loft.

"Well, and how did the little daughter sleep?" he asked cheerfully, seeing that Clara was lying wide awake, gazing in rapture at the golden sunbeams that danced over the hay. When, to his great satisfaction, she had assured him that she had not stirred the whole night through, he began to help her to dress, with hands as gentle and skillful as a woman's; and by the time Heidi opened her eyes, Clara was all ready to begin the day on the Alm. The night before, when the children had gone to bed, the old man had enlarged the doorway of the goats' stall so that the invalid's chair could be rolled through it, into the shed, and now he had brought it forth again, so that it stood in readiness for Clara outside the hut.

Here he settled her comfortably in the warm sunshine, and himself went off to milk the goats.

The little girl lay back breathing in the pure, sweet air in deep draughts that seemed to fill her with new life. The aromatic fragrance of the pine-trees, the sunlight that flickered on the grass between the branches were pleasures that she had never before tasted.

"Oh, Heidi!" she murmured happily. "I wish I could stay here forever!"

"You see!" exclaimed Heidi, triumphantly. "It's just as I said—the loveliest place in the whole world is here on the Alm with Grandfather."

At that moment the Alm-Uncle returned carrying two cups brimming with snow-white, foaming milk.

"*This* will do the little daughter good!" said he, giving one cup to Clara and the other to Heidi. "Little Swan sends it to you, and it will make you grow strong and rosy, so drink it up! To your good health!"

Clara, who had never drunk any goat's milk, hesitated a little uncertainly; but when she saw with what relish Heidi emptied her cup, she put hers to her lips—and then drank it to the last drop!

"Good!" said the Alm-Uncle, highly satisfied with the way in which she had followed Heidi's example. "And to-morrow you'll be drinking *two* cupfuls."

A little later, Peter came with his flock, and while Heidi was bestowing her morning greetings on all the goats, the old man beckoned the boy to one side.

"Listen, now—and pay attention to what I say," said the Alm-Uncle. "From to-day on, you are to let Little Swan graze where she pleases in the pastures. She has a keen scent, and is much cleverer than you are about finding the places where the best herbs grow. If she wants to climb over the rocks, it won't hurt you to climb after her, and she must have the best pasturage so that her milk will be as good as any milk can be in this world. Mind well what I have said—and now, be off with you!"

Peter, of course, did not dare to argue with the old man; but it could be plainly seen that he was not in a good humor this morning. As the goats tried to pull Heidi along with them, the boy suddenly turned to her, and nodding his head violently, said:

"Yes, you've got to come with us—if I'm to take special care of Little Swan, you've got to come along!"

"No, I can't," said Heidi. "And I won't be able to for a long time, Peter. But Grandfather has promised that both of us can come with you later on when Clara is better." With that, she sprang away from the scrambling, pushing flock, and ran back to Clara's side.

Furtively, but with savage rage, Peter raised his two fists and shook them threateningly in the direction of the rolling-chair; then seized with the fear that the Alm-Uncle might have seen that angry gesture, he took to his heels, and flew up the mountain path, with his goats capering wildly behind him.

Heidi and Clara had planned to do so many things that they did not know where to begin; but finally Heidi decided that first of all they should write to Grandmamma Sesemann; for the old lady had not been quite sure just how the experiment with Clara would work out in the long run, and had made them promise to write to her as often as they could, telling her everything they did, and how Clara was getting on in the mountains.

So Heidi fetched paper and pencils from the hut, and giving Clara a book to write on, sat down with the bench in front of her for a desk. Then both began to scribble away diligently. But after every sentence that she

wrote, Clara would have to put down her pencil, and look around her upon the lovely scene. The wind was warmer now, and little insects hummed drowsily as they darted back and forth, and the peaceful silence was broken now and then only by the distant call of some shepherd boy, whose clear note echoed back from the crags.

The morning slipped by, without either of the children noticing how the hours fled, and soon the Alm-Uncle came again bringing them their midday milk. Then when they had eaten their luncheon with a good appetite, Heidi wheeled Clara into the cool shade of the pine-trees, and there they spent the afternoon talking happily together.

At sundown came Peter; but as before, he seemed queerly sullen and taciturn, and made no reply when the two little girls called out a friendly "good-night!" Nobody paid any attention to the youth's ill-humor, however, so he trotted away with his goats, more sulky and resentful than ever.

"It's queer, Heidi," remarked Clara, who was watching the Alm-Uncle milk Little Swan, "I never used to be hungry at all,—everything seemed to taste to me of cod-liver oil, and I only ate because I had to. But now, I can hardly wait for your grandfather to bring my milk!"

"Oh, I know how you used to feel," Heidi replied, nodding her head; and indeed she had not forgotten how, when she was in Frankfort, the food used to stick in her throat as if it would choke her.

When the Alm-Uncle brought them their brimming cups, Clara took hers eagerly, and drank her milk so thirstily that even Heidi had not finished when she held her cup out again to the old man.

"Please, may I have a little more?" she asked. And, of course, nothing could have given the Alm-Uncle greater pleasure than to fill the cup again to the very brim. He had a very special dainty for their supper, too,—for that morning he had gone all the way to Mayenfeld, which was famous for its dairy products, and now he gave them each a thick slice of bread, generously spread with the most delicious butter, which was a very rare delicacy on the Alm. It had cost him some trouble to get it, but he was more than repaid for his pains when he saw with what relish the little girls ate their bread.

After such a day, passed in the fresh air and sunshine, Clara lay down beside Heidi that night, and was sound asleep before she had taken two looks at the starry sky.

Thus passed two or three happy, quiet days; then one morning, there came a surprise for the two little girls. Heidi and Clara were sitting outside the hut, when they saw two men coming up to the Alm, each bearing on his shoulders a pretty little bed, completely equipped with mattress, pillows, and covers, all snowy white, and brand new. One of the porters had also brought a letter from Mrs. Sesemann, which explained that the beds were for Clara and Heidi, with her love. One of them was Heidi's, to keep always, and to take down to Dorfli in winter, and the other one was to be kept at the hut for

Clara to use whenever she visited the Alm. Then Grandmamma went on to praise the children for their long and interesting letters, which, she said, made her feel just as if she had been living with them from day to day, sharing all their pleasures. Assured as she was now that all was well with her little Clara, she had decided to stay on in Ragatz a little longer, for the trip up the mountain was a little tiring for her; but she begged them both to write to her very often, and sent them both her fondest love.

With the assistance of the two porters, the Alm-Uncle had quickly cleared the hay from the loft, and put up the two pretty bedsteads, placing them so that the children could lie and look out of the window, for he knew how they loved to see the stars at night, and the first rosy flush of dawn when they awoke.

He showed a fatherly tenderness for the little invalid, and sought every day to find some new way of giving her pleasure, and increasing her strength. Each afternoon he climbed the mountains, returning at evening with armfuls of sweet-smelling herbs. These he gave only to Little Swan—for of course he did not risk his limbs among the rocks merely to give the flock a meal that it had not troubled to get—but to nourish the little goat whose milk Clara found so delicious. One could see that Little Swan realized her own importance, for she put on airs, and tossed her head, and her eyes sparkled with pride.

Three weeks of Clara's visit had already flown by, and now when the Alm-Uncle brought her out-of-doors in the

morning, he began to coax her to try to stand for a moment or two every day. But although she did her best to please him, she still would cling to him fearfully, crying out that it hurt her. Nevertheless he persisted in making the attempt, and each time she stood a little while longer than the time before.

That summer was the loveliest that had visited the Alps for years. Every morning the sun rose warm and golden in a cloudless sky, and in the evening dyed the mountain peaks with its purple and rosy light.

Heidi never tired of telling, nor did Clara ever tire of hearing about the flower-strewn pastures, and while they sat, one balmy afternoon, under the trees this was the theme of their conversation. It had been a long time since Heidi had been to the meadows, and as she talked, the desire to see once more their warm, flower-studded slopes, and the fiery sunset over the snowfields became so intense that suddenly she sprang up and ran to her grandfather, who was working away busily in his little shop.

"Grandfather, please, *please* will you take us up to the pastures to-morrow!" she cried. "It must be so beautiful up there now!"

The old man thought for a moment, then he smiled.

"I will—on one condition: that Clara will try again this evening to stand up all by herself."

Beaming with joy, Heidi carried this answer back to Clara, who willingly promised to try to stand alone as often as the Alm-Uncle wished her to.

"Peter! Peter!" shouted Heidi, running to meet the boy who was just returning from the pastures. "To-

morrow we are all going with you, and we can spend the whole day up in the mountains!"

But Peter's only reply was a bearish growl; and in his ill-humor he even tried to hit poor Thistlefinch with his staff. But that nimble young goat had become very skillful of late in avoiding her young master's temperamental outbursts, and leaping spryly over Snowhopper, she trotted merrily away toward Dorfli.

So enraptured were Heidi and Clara with the prospect that lay before them, that they had made up their minds to lie awake all night discussing their plans for the following day. But no sooner had they climbed into their pretty new beds and laid their curly heads on the soft pillows than their merry chatter began to grow more and more drowsy. And presently both were sleeping soundly, dreaming of the warm pastures where the harebells nodded, and the eagle soared aloft, calling to them, "Come up! Come up!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

THE morning dawned, sunny and warm, and the Alm-Uncle brought out the rolling-chair, to have it in readiness for the trip to the pastures. Then he went back into the hut to waken the two little girls.

Meanwhile, Master Peter, climbing up from Dorfli, was brooding so deeply upon his grievances that by the time he reached the Alm he had worked himself up to the last pitch of exasperation and bitterness against the world in general, and against the little invalid from Frankfort in particular. For more than a week he had not had Heidi to himself for a moment. When he came to the Alm in the morning, there sat the little stranger in her rolling-chair, with Heidi at her side. In the evening it was the same, and now, to-day, when Heidi was coming up to the pastures for the first time that summer, the stranger and the rolling-chair had to come along, too—which if it was no worse, was certainly no better than not having Heidi at all!

Now the very first thing that met Peter's eyes when he reached the Alm was that everlasting, hateful rolling-chair. The boy glared at it as if he regarded it as a personal enemy who was responsible for all his grievances. Then, suddenly, he smiled grimly. A furtive glance around him assured him that no one was near,

and all at once he gave the chair a savage push. Off it flew toward the cliff—hesitated a moment on the brink—then plunged forward!

For a moment, the boy stood still, revelling in his revenge. But all at once a panic seized him; and pale with fright, he dashed away up the mountain path, without stopping until he had come to a thick blackberry bush, behind which he hid himself, lest the Alm-Uncle should see him running, and guess that it was he who had perpetrated the crime.

At length, possessed by a curiosity to witness the fate of the ill-starred rolling-chair, he peeped cautiously forth from his hiding place; and with a wild joy that was not unmingled with terror, saw it still crashing from ledge to precipice, down, down into the valley, until, with a last crazy somersault, it landed in a shapeless ruin on the rocks far below.

Peter felt a thrill of savage exultation. He laughed aloud; he jumped and danced; he hugged himself and danced again. Now, he'd see whether that girl from Frankfort would come up to the pastures, and keep Heidi away from him any more! She would have to go home, for how could she get about at all without her rolling-chair?

But Master Peter had not reckoned upon all the consequences of an evil action.

Heidi had just come running out of the hut, followed by her grandfather, who carried Clara in his arms.

"Come, Heidi—where have you pushed the chair to, now?" demanded the Alm-Uncle. But Heidi, who had

already been looking for it in the shed, turned to him in surprise, for the door was open, and the shed was empty, but the chair was nowhere to be seen.

"I didn't push it anywhere, Grandfather—and it isn't in here. You said it was standing in front of the shop."

It so happened that the wind was blowing very strongly from the mountains, and when their search of the Alm proved vain, they finally concluded that the chair must have been blown over the cliff.

"Oh, Grandfather, if it's gone all the way down to Dorfli, we can never bring it back in time to go to the pastures!" wailed Heidi, in bitter disappointment.

"If it has gone down to Dorfli, we'll never get it back at all," said the old man, grimly. "It will have been broken into a thousand pieces. Hum—it seems rather queer," he added, half to himself, for he had taken care to leave it where it would have been sheltered from the wind by the wall of the hut.

"O-o-h—now we can't go! And perhaps we never can!" cried poor Clara, bursting into tears. "And now I'll have to go home!"

But Heidi, whose confidence in her grandfather's resourcefulness was unbounded, was not hopeless.

"*You* can find a way to take us to the pastures, can't you, Grandfather?" she asked him, eagerly.

"Well, I think we shall go up to the pastures to-day as we planned—and then we'll see what's to be done next, so that Clara won't have to go away and leave us."

These comforting words cheered the little girls, and when the Alm-Uncle had brought some rugs, and let

forth Little Swan and Little Bear from their stall, they were as merry as ever.

Still, Peter had not made his appearance.

"What can be keeping the boy?" growled the Alm-Uncle. "Well—we'll go ahead without him, then." And off they started, the old man carrying Clara with one arm, and the rugs with the other, and Heidi following, leading the two little goats.

What was their surprise when, upon reaching the pastures, the first sight that met their eyes was Master Peter himself, dozing peacefully on the warm grass while the goats clambered about the rocks, nibbling and munching.

"You young rascal!" shouted the Alm-Uncle. "The next time you go off like this without stopping for my goats, I'll teach you a good lesson! What do you mean by it?"

At the sound of that well-known voice, Peter leaped to his feet in terror.

"B-but n-no one w-was up!" he stammered.

"Did you see the rolling-chair when you went by?"

"Th-the what?" gasped Peter, feeling his blood run cold.

But the Alm-Uncle said nothing more. Calmly he spread the rugs upon the grass and laid Clara gently on them.

"This is just as comfortable as my chair," she assured him, gratefully, "and oh! how beautiful! How beautiful it is!"

The old man then showed Heidi where he had put the

haversack, and told her to be sure to see that Peter got their milk from Little Swan. Then, leaving them to enjoy their day until he came for them at sundown, he returned to the Alm to make a more thorough search for the rolling-chair.

The children were in the seventh heaven. Now and then one of the little goats would come and lie near them, and indeed Snowhopper would never have stirred away from Heidi, had she not been forced to do so by her fellows who all wanted to usurp her place. In a little while Clara had learned the names of every one of them, and found that it was really quite easy to tell them apart after one knew them a little, for each had its own particular appearance and habits, just like a human being. And when now and then one came close to her, and even rubbed its head against her shoulder she was charmed, for she felt that this meant that they no longer regarded her as a stranger, but as a friend.

Soon Heidi, who had not been to the pastures all summer, began to long to visit some of her favorite haunts, to see whether the flowers were blooming as profusely as in the years before. But she did not like to leave Clara alone. True, when her grandfather came for them in the evening he could take them both around the pastures, but by that time most of the prettiest flowers would have closed their eyes for the night.

After a little while she could not sit still any longer.

"Clara," she began hesitatingly, "would you mind very much if I should take a little walk? I just want to

see what the flowers are like this year. But wait ——!" as she spoke she suddenly jumped up, and gathering a handful of fragrant herbs, easily lured little Snowhopper to Clara's side.

"There! Now you *won't* be alone!" And she laid the bunch of herbs in Clara's lap. The older child assured her that she would be quite content now that she had little Snowhopper, for she had never before had a chance to become intimately acquainted with a young mountain goat.

So, while Heidi scampered away over the pasture, Clara lay in the sunshine, feeding the herbs to Snowhopper leaf by leaf, and the little creature, gazing trustfully up into her face, snuggled closer to her side, plainly showing how happy she was to be with this gentle protectress, safe from the rude pranks of her fellows, whose rough ways frightened her.

It was a new experience for Clara to pet and shelter a weaker creature, and a great longing rose in her to be able to help others instead of always being helped by them. A new joy filled her heart—life seemed wonderfully sweet and full and desirable all of a sudden, and drawing the little goat's head against her breast, she murmured, "Oh, Snowhopper, I am so happy now—if only I could stay here forever!"

Heidi had found rock-roses and gentians and harebells and bachelor's-buttons more abundant than ever—the sunny slopes exhaled the mingled fragrance of thousands of sweet-smelling blossoms, and she drank it in with deep breaths. Suddenly she felt that somehow or

other, Clara simply had to see the summer in all its glory on the Alm, and running to the edge of the cliff, she shouted down:

"Oh, Clara, you must come up here! You *must!* It's too beautiful for words, and later all the flowers will be closed up. I'm sure I could carry you!"

Clara looked as if she thought that Heidi must have lost her wits; then she shook her head, a little sadly.

"No, no, Heidi! What are you saying?—Why, you are much smaller than I am! But I wish—I *wish* I *could* go with you!"

Heidi, however, would not abandon the idea, and stood looking about her, trying to think how it would be possible to bring Clara farther up on the slopes.

Now, all this time Peter had been lying on a grassy ledge above them, staring at Clara in angry astonishment as if he could not believe the testimony of his own eyes. By all the laws of reason, it was quite impossible that she should be there—her rolling-chair was broken into a thousand bits. He could not imagine how she could have got to the pastures. And yet—there she was, lying on her rugs, with Heidi beside her. With grim desperation, he foresaw that in the future it would always be like that—Heidi was lost to him forever!

Heidi herself, who had suddenly spied him as he lay peering down at them, now called to him imperatively.

"Come down here, Peter!"

"Won't!" he shouted back.

"You must! You've got to help me."

"Won't, I say!"

Instantly, Heidi had sprung up beside him, and stood over him with flashing eyes.

"Peter, if you don't come down at once, I'll do something you won't like! That you can be sure of!"

Peter felt a chill of fright. She must know about the chair! Perhaps she meant that she would tell the Alm-Uncle! And then!!—His guilty conscience did not permit him to defy anyone now, and trembling in every limb, he gave way with the meekness of the conscious sinner.

"I'll come! I'll come! But *don't* do what you say, Heidi!" he implored. And his fear was so great that Heidi was touched with remorse.

"All right, I won't, Peter. There's nothing to be afraid of—just come and help me."

When they had reached Clara's side, Heidi gave her orders. Peter was to take Clara by one arm, and she herself would take the other. But this arrangement was not without its difficulties, for Peter was taller than Heidi, so that Clara's support was higher on one side than on the other.

"No—you must put your arm around my neck, Clara," said Heidi, "and lean on Peter's arm. So!"

But Peter, who had never offered his arm to anyone in his life, kept it pressed stiff and straight against his side.

"Not that way, Peter," cried Heidi. "You must curve it—this way. And whatever you do don't let it drop. Clara, hold on to him—tight. Now let's start."

Timidly, Clara tried to put one foot in front of the

other, as she had seen people do when they walked, but it was very painful for her, and she swayed weakly.

"Press them down harder—then it won't hurt you so much," urged Heidi.

Clara obeyed. Very slowly she put down one foot, then moved the other in front of it.

"Oh—that really didn't hurt so much!" she exclaimed, joyfully.

"Then try it once more," Heidi insisted.

Clara took a third step—then another—and still another. And suddenly gave a cry of delight and wonder.

"Oh, I can do it, Heidi! I can!—See! Oh, Heidi, I am walking!"

"Oh!" Heidi rejoiced. "If only Grandfather would come now!"

For with each step, Clara grew steadier and surer.

"Now we can come up to the pastures every day!" exulted Heidi. "And you'll never have to sit in your chair again! You'll be able to walk all your life, Clara—oh, what joy!"

The dearest wish of Clara's life had been fulfilled—for she felt that from now on she was going to grow strong and well, and be like other people at last.

It was not far to the lovely spot where the flowers covered the ground like a fairy rug—and here they sat down to rest. Never before had Clara lain on the warm dry earth, and for her it was a new and exquisite pleasure. As for Heidi, her joy in the realization that Clara was really going to get well made everything she looked

at seem more beautiful. Silent from the great happiness that filled their hearts, they lay there in the sunshine, content just to watch the flowers nodding in the wind, and the cloudless sky above them.

Peter, too, was silent, and like them lay motionless in the midst of that patch of perfume and color, but less appreciative of its beauty than they, he had simply gone to sleep.

It was long past midday, and at length two or three of the goats came wandering to the place where the children were lying. They never grazed here, for it was not good for them to eat flowers; but they had missed their companions, and had come in search of them.

Thistlefinch was the first to see the missing children, whereupon she stretched out her head, and bleated loudly with delight. Instantly the whole herd who had followed her broke into an ear-splitting chorus of joy which roused Peter from his slumbers. The boy had just been dreaming that he had seen the rolling-chair standing in front of the hut, once again sound and new; but the goats had brought him back to the world of fact, and upon waking, the realization of his crime broke over him anew, with all the agony of a guilty conscience increased tenfold.

The fear that Heidi might know the truth and inform against him made him unnaturally docile, and when she now bade him go and bring their milk and the haversack, he obeyed without a word of protest.

The Alm-Uncle had provided a generous meal for the three children, but to-day, the weight of the sack, hint-

ing as it did that there would be plenty even for the voracious Peter, brought no happiness to the heart of the conscience-stricken little goatherd.

Heidi divided the lunch into three equal portions, but she and Clara were satisfied when they had eaten only a small part of their share, and as usual on these occasions there was a great deal left over for Peter to make way with when he had devoured his own meal. He managed, it is true, to consume everything in sight, down to the last crumb, but he did not perform this duty with his usual gusto. Something seemed to lie uncommonly heavy on his stomach, and every morsel that he swallowed added to his deep depression.

Not long after the belated meal, the Alm-Uncle was seen climbing the path to the meadows. Heidi could not wait to tell him the wonderful news, and rushing toward him, began to pour forth such a confused account that one could hardly have guessed what the happy child was trying to say. But the old man understood in a moment, and with his face alight with joy, he went quickly to Clara's side.

"You risked it? And you have won!" he said, tenderly. Then, very gently he raised her from the ground, and as he supported her with one arm, Clara, her fear quite gone, walked forward slowly, but with a firmer and steadier step than before. Heidi capered for joy.

"But we mustn't overdo it to-day," said the Alm-Uncle, presently. "Now it is time to go home." And taking her in his arms he carried her down the mountain. For he knew that she had exerted herself enough,

and that in a great measure her recovery would depend on proper rest after these brave efforts to walk alone.

When Peter reached Dorfli that evening—somewhat later than usual—he found a large crowd collected on the green, pressing closely to get a view of some object that was hidden by the dense circle of curious spectators. Peter, too, was curious to see what this object was, and by dint of pushing and shoving he managed presently to get a peep over the shoulders of the bystanders.

Then he saw that the object was—the rolling-chair.

On the grass lay the seat and a portion of the back, its bright nails and red velvet cushions bearing witness to the fact that once upon a time it had been a very handsome rolling-chair indeed.

"I saw it when it landed," said the baker, who was standing beside Peter. "I'll wager it was worth at least a hundred dollars! But for the life of me I can't think how it could have come to this state!"

"Most likely the wind blew it over the cliff up there," suggested Dame Barbel.

"Well, we haven't heard the end of the story yet," said the baker, shaking his head. "When the folks come from Frankfort they'll get a detective as won't leave a stone unturned until he's found out who's to blame. Thank the good Lord, it's been two years at the least since I was anywheres near the Alm! They'll suspect everyone who's been around there at the time this happened."

Peter had heard quite enough. He slipped away from

the crowd and scuttled home as fast as his trembling legs would carry him. The baker's words had chilled the very marrow of his bones. Any moment, now, the detective might arrive from Frankfort to search out the culprit;—and in his mind's eye the unhappy Peter already saw himself behind the bars of the Frankfort jail.

He could not eat his supper that night, nor could he give any answers to his mother's anxious questions. Utterly miserable, he crawled off to his bed and lay there, groaning.

"Peterkin must have been eating sorrel again to-day,—it always gives him a stomach ache," sighed Brigida. "I don't know what else could make him act so queer."

"Perhaps you ought to give him a little more bread to take to the pastures. Give him some of mine to-morrow, Brigida," said Granny, sympathetically. "Then the poor child won't be so hungry that he'll have to eat sorrel."

That night, when the two little girls lay tucked in their beds, Heidi said:

"I've been thinking the whole day, Clara, how good it is that the dear God does not always give us right away what we pray for—when He knows of something still better for us."

"How do you mean, Heidi?"

"Well, you see when I was in Frankfort I used to pray with all my heart that I could go home. But nothing happened for a long time, and I thought that God

didn't hear me. But if He had given me then what I asked for, you would never have come up here to the Alm, and have gotten well."

Clara became thoughtful.

"But then, Heidi," she said presently, "you could say that one doesn't need to pray at all, for if God knows what is best for us, why shouldn't we leave it to Him to give us what we need, and not ask Him for anything?"

"Oh, but we ought to pray every day to thank Him for all the good things that He sends us," said Heidi earnestly. "And if we forget Him, then He forgets us. That's what Grandmamma told me. And I think that to-day especially we ought to thank Him with all our hearts, because He has made you able to walk."

"That is true, Heidi," said Clara. "And I'm glad you reminded me. I am so happy that I had forgotten how thankful I ought to be."

And then the two children folded their hands, and offered up their prayer of thanksgiving together.

The next morning the Alm-Uncle suggested that they write to Grandmamma, telling her to come to see them as soon as she could, and to be prepared for a wonderful surprise. But the little girls had another plan. First, Clara was to walk a little every day for another week, until she should be able to go without any other help than a little support from Heidi. *Then* they would write to Grandmamma, and ask her to come, but without even hinting that anything extraordinary had taken

place. She was not to have even an inkling of the wonderful surprise that was in store for her.

The days that followed were the happiest that Clara had ever known. Each morning she awoke with her heart singing:

"I am well! I am well! Never will I have to lie helpless again! I can *walk!*"

Her strength increased every day, and the exercise that she could take now, gave her such an appetite that the Alm-Uncle had to cut her bread and butter thicker and thicker, and fill her cups of milk more and more often, until her cheeks began to bloom almost as rosily as Heidi's.

And at last the week had passed, and the time approached for Grandmamma, still ignorant of the great surprise in store for her, to come.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

PARTING TO MEET AGAIN

A DAY before her return to the Alps, Mrs. Sesemann had sent a letter to the children telling them of her intention to come to them, and Peter delivered the letter the following morning on his way to the pastures.

The Alm-Uncle was standing at the door of the hut when the boy came up, watching Clara and Heidi, who were playing with Little Swan and Little Bear; and in the old man's eyes, as they rested now on the rosy faces of the children, now on the sleek coats of his two little goats, shone a smile of profound satisfaction.

Poor Peter approached the group timidly, holding the letter out to the old man, and as the Alm-Uncle put his hand to take it the boy sprang back with a frightened expression as if he expected something or someone to hurt him. Then he turned and ran off up the path.

Heidi stared at his disappearing figure in wonder.

"Peter acts just the way Turk does whenever he sees a switch. What do you suppose is the matter with him, Grandfather?" she asked.

"Perhaps Peter *does* see the switch—that he deserves," the old man replied dryly.

If Heidi had seen how Peter was behaving now, when he had got half-way up to the pastures, she would have been still more puzzled by his extraordinary actions.

He had abruptly stopped running, and now began to walk slowly and cautiously, peering nervously at every bush and boulder; and once, when a bramble caught his clothes, he sprang into the air with a yell of terror.

Never since the day he had destroyed the rolling-chair had the miserable youth known a moment's peace. In every corner, as he imagined, lurked the detective who had come to capture him and take him to jail.

But the two little girls passed a happy morning, putting the hut in perfect order so that it should look its very best when Grandmamma arrived. Then when everything was ready they made themselves neat and clean and sat down on the bench to wait, eagerly gazing down the path so that they would see her the moment she came in sight. And presently the Alm-Uncle appeared with a magnificent bunch of dark blue gentians that he had gathered himself, on the mountains, to do honor to the coming guest.

At last the little cavalcade appeared far down the mountain; first, the guide, leading the white horse which Grandmamma was riding; then the two porters, laden down as before with the wraps and rugs without which the wary Mrs. Sesemann took care never to venture into the mountains. Nearer and nearer the procession came, until at last it had reached the top.

"Clara! What do I see? You are not in your chair!" cried the old lady, in alarm; and dismounting quickly, she hurriedly approached the two children. But a second glance changed her fright to incredulous joy.

"My dearest little Clara—can it really be *you!*" she

cried. "I cannot believe it—your cheeks are as red and round as apples!"

But before she could take her granddaughter in her arms, Heidi had quietly slipped her arm around Clara's waist, and, as the older girl leaned lightly on her shoulder, they took a little walk together, Clara moving slowly, but perfectly firmly.

Mrs. Sesemann watched them, as if she hardly understood what was happening, but when they came back to her with rosy, beaming faces, she threw herself upon them, and, unable to speak for joy, embraced now Clara, now Heidi, and now Clara again, weeping and laughing at the same time.

Then her eyes fell upon the Alm-Uncle, who, standing beside the bench, was watching the little scene with pleasure and sympathy.

"My dear Uncle!" cried Mrs. Sesemann, taking both of his hands in hers, and shaking them warmly. "How can I ever thank you? There are no words—it is all due to you—to your care——"

"But chiefly to our Lord's sunshine and pure mountain air," interrupted the Alm-Uncle smiling.

"Yes,—and to Little Swan's delicious milk, too!" added Clara. "You ought to see how much goat's milk I can drink now, Grandmamma!"

"I might guess—by those rosy cheeks of yours, my little Clara!" laughed Mrs. Sesemann. "No—certainly I would *never* have known you—so rosy and stout and tall. Never would I even have dared to hope to see you like this! I cannot look at you enough! I must tele-

graph to your father to come at once—I won't tell him why, because I want it to be a surprise for him—the happiest of his life. Yes, I must hurry back to Dorfli right away. But ——" she glanced around her. "How can I manage? The men have gone with my horse."

"Yes—but if Mrs. Sesemann is in a hurry, we can have the goatherd here in a moment, and he can take the telegram to Dorfli for you." And, as he spoke, the Alm-Uncle blew a shrill whistle that went echoing up to the very tops of the crags.

A moment later Peter, who knew that whistle well, came scrambling down from the pastures as fast as his legs would carry him. His heart failed him—his blood was congealing in his veins—his face was as white as chalk. Now, without a doubt, all had been discovered. His fate was sealed, and ——

But all that was wanted of him, as it turned out, was that he should take a piece of paper down to the postmaster in Dorfli. Weak with relief, he took the despatch and scurried away, while the little party at the hut gathered around the table outside the hut, to lunch.

The two children were highly satisfied with the success of their surprise.

"I cannot yet believe that it is possible!" the delighted Grandmamma kept exclaiming again and again. "It is like a dream to see you sitting there, Clara—and to think that this bright-eyed, rosy girl is the same person as the pale listless little Clara of old!"

Now, Mr. Sesemann, having finished his business in Paris, was preparing a surprise of his own. Without

saying a word about it, he had started immediately for Basle, and from there took the train for Ragatz, intending to spend a few hours with his mother, before he hurried on to visit his beloved little daughter, whom he had not seen since the beginning of the summer. But at Ragatz, he received the news that Mrs. Sesemann had left that very day for the Alps. Immediately he hastened on to Dorfli, and from there set out on foot for the Alm, thinking that the climb would be only a short one.

But before long, the ascent began to grow more and more tedious and exhausting; he was not accustomed to mountain climbing and, moreover, he was impatient. Soon he began to look about anxiously for a glimpse of hut or cottage. From Heidi's description he remembered that the first dwelling he would come to would be the goatherd's cottage, half-way up to the Alm; but not even the goatherd's house was to be seen.

Narrow footpaths led this way and that over the slope, so that soon Mr. Sesemann was in doubt as to whether he was even going in the right direction. He stopped short, hot and dusty, thinking that perhaps the hut might be on the other side of the mountain, and hoping to encounter someone who might direct him. But no one was to be seen, and as he stood dabbing his hot forehead with his handkerchief, he heard only the breath of the summer wind, and the humming of insects among the grasses, and occasionally the liquid trill of a bird note.

Then, suddenly he spied a figure running down the mountain, straight ahead over rocks and hummocks,

ignoring the less direct path on which Mr. Sesemann was standing. It was Peter, with the despatch in his hand. As soon as the boy was within earshot, Mr. Sesemann called to him, and Peter, trembling and frightened, sidled toward him.

"Come, my lad, can you tell me if I am on the right path to the hut where an old man lives with a child named Heidi? Some people from Frankfort are staying there."

To this question, Peter's only reply was a look of horror, and a single inarticulate sound. Instantly he had shied away from Mr. Sesemann, then, losing his footing, went tumbling head over heels down the steep slope.

Lucky it was for Peter that he did not meet the same fate as the rolling-chair!

"What an extraordinary, bashful mountaineer!" said Mr. Sesemann to himself; to him Peter's peculiar behavior appeared only as the quaint timidity of a simple native in the presence of a stranger; and having no other choice in the matter, he continued his way up the mountain.

Meanwhile Peter went on rolling and tumbling and bumping down the hillside, vainly trying to stop his fall by grasping at the weeds and shrubs that he passed in his violent descent. But bruised and shaken as he was, his bodily pains were as nothing in comparison with the anguish of his soul. For now he was certain that the stranger who had accosted him was the detective—whom the people from Frankfort had sent for to come

and seize the criminal who had destroyed the rolling-chair.

Just before he reached the edge of the high bank overhanging the village, he plunged violently into a bramble bush which stopped his fall, though it added a few more severe scratches to the rest of his injuries. For a moment or two he lay still, dazed and breathless, and trying to collect his addled thoughts.

"Bravo! Let's have another somersault!" said a mocking voice near by. "The wind must be blowing hard again on the Alm. What has it blown down to us this morning like an empty potato sack?"

It was the baker, returning from his early rounds, who thus made merry over Peter's plight. The boy was seized with fresh terror. The baker's words convinced him that the man knew very well what kind of a wind it had been that had blown the rolling-chair down the mountain; and was making cruel sport of him.

Bruised and giddy as he was, and entirely forgetful of the despatch that had been lost in his fall, he sprang to his feet, and ran frantically up the hill. He longed to rush home, and hide himself in his bed, where his mother would protect him, but unfortunately all his goats were still in the pastures, and the Alm-Uncle had sternly bidden him to come back as soon as he had delivered the despatch, so that the herd would not be left too long without a guardian. The idea of disobeying the Alm-Uncle never entered his head, so, notwithstanding his aching bones, he plodded painfully back to the pastures.

Mr. Sesemann had meanwhile reached the goatherd's cottage, and, assured now that he was on the right path, quickened his pace. A few minutes more, and he saw the hut above him and the dark tops of the pine-trees swaying in the wind. But before he had reached it, he had been seen and recognized already by the merry party on the Alm, and two of the figures started toward him eagerly.

Mr. Sesemann stared at them for a moment; then suddenly his heart gave a queer leap and he stood still. For leaning on Heidi's arm was a tall girl with rosy cheeks and bright flowing hair, and blue eyes shining with health and joy. The tears started to his own eyes, springing from the sweet pain of an old memory. It was just so that Clara's mother had looked—rosy and golden-haired and smiling like the young girl who was coming toward him. He hardly knew whether he was awake or dreaming.

"Papa darling, don't you know me?" cried Clara. "Have I changed so much?"

Then Mr. Sesemann rushed to her, and took her in his arms.

"Changed? My little Clara!—My little Clara! Can it be true?"

He held her away from him, gazing at her as if he feared that she might suddenly vanish.

"But it *is* you, my darling!" he said over and over again. "It *is* true!"

"Well, my son, what do you say now?" said Grandmamma, as she hurried to greet him affectionately.

"Your surprise is a joyful one, but I think that ours surpasses it! And now, my dear son, you must come and see the Uncle to whom we are indebted for this great happiness!"

"Indeed I will! And I must greet our little Heidi, who is our hostess," said Mr. Sesemann, taking the child's hand in his and shaking it warmly. "Are you well and sound again? But one need hardly ask! An Alpine rose could not look more blooming! And it is a great pleasure to me, my child, to see you look so healthy and happy—a *great* pleasure!"

And Heidi's eyes shone, too, with pleasure, for Mr. Sesemann had been very good to her, and it made her very happy to think that he had found such joy awaiting him on her beloved Alm.

Grandmamma led him to the Alm-Uncle and the two men shook hands in the most friendly way. Then Mrs. Sesemann left her son to try to express the gratitude that was almost beyond words, and wandered off by herself under the pine-trees. Here she came upon an unexpected surprise, for in a little hollow among the gnarled roots stood a superb nosegay of dark-blue gentians as if they had grown there naturally.

"How exquisite!" she cried. "Heidi, my dearest little Heidi, come here to me! Was it you who brought me this beautiful nosegay?"

"No—it wasn't me, Grandmamma," said Heidi, "but I know quite well who it was!"

"Now you can get some idea of what it is like up in the pastures, Grandmamma," put in Clara. "But now

try to guess who picked them for you!" and she laughed with such sly delight that for a moment Mrs. Sesemann fancied that it might have been Clara herself. But that was hardly possible as yet.

Before she could hazard another guess, however, there came a soft rustling from behind the pine-trees, and then they caught sight of Peter, who had at last gained the Alm. But the boy had already seen the Alm-Uncle, and doubling himself up like a jack-knife, was trying to steal away unseen under cover of the trees. Mrs. Sesemann had recognized him, however, and it now occurred to her that it might have been the boy who had brought the flowers, and that he was too shy to stay and receive her thanks. This touched the kind old lady, and she called to him:

"Come here, my lad,—come. Don't be shy!"

Paralyzed with fright, Peter stood stock-still. All resistance had been thumped out of him by his recent harrowing experiences. Now, the game was up! With his hair fairly standing erect, and pale as a ghost, the miserable youth crept forth from his hiding place.

"Come now," said Mrs. Sesemann kindly. "Don't be afraid—tell me, did *you* do it?"

Peter had not dared to raise his eyes, and consequently failed to see where Mrs. Sesemann was pointing. All he was conscious of was that the Alm-Uncle was standing near the corner of the hut, with his piercing eyes fixed upon him, and that beside him was the alarming stranger from Frankfort whom the haunted Peter was convinced was the detective.

Stammering, and trembling in every limb, Peter uttered a smothered

"Yes!"

"But why should you be so troubled about it?" asked Grandmamma in some surprise.

"B-b-because it's b-broken to p-pieces and they c-can't m-mend it!" groaned Peter, and now his knees shook so that he could hardly stand.

Mrs. Sesemann turned to the Alm-Uncle.

"My dear Uncle, do you understand this poor boy?" she asked, full of sympathy.

"It's nothing, madam," returned the Alm-Uncle in his dry way. "It's only *he* was the wind that blew the rolling-chair away. And he is expecting the punishment that he richly deserves."

Mrs. Sesemann stared at Peter in astonishment, for certainly he did not look like a wicked youth, and she could not imagine what reason he could have had for destroying the chair. But the Alm-Uncle, who had observed the sullen aspect that Peter had worn ever since Clara's arrival, and the bitter glances that he had cast at the little invalid, had put two and two together quite wonderfully, and in front of the wretched Peter gave a very accurate explanation of the mysterious accident. When he had finished, Mrs. Sesemann began to laugh.

"Well, well, my dear Uncle," said she, "I think we needn't punish the boy any more, for it's evident that his conscience has punished him severely enough already. After all, one can understand how he must have felt when these Frankforters came and robbed him of his

little comrade. It is true that his anger led him into what might have been a very grave folly, but when we are angry we are all foolish."

Then she went back to Peter, who was still trembling like an aspen, and seating herself on the bench, she spoke to him as kindly as before.

"Come here, my lad—I have something to say to you. But stop trembling and stammering. I know that it was you who pushed the chair down the mountain, and it was a very wrong thing to do, as you know quite well. You knew, also, that it was an act that deserved punishment. Perhaps you thought at the time that no one saw you, but in that you were mistaken. For no matter how one hides an evil deed, the good God sees it, as He sees all things. And then do you know what happens? There is a little watchman who lives in every one of us, who sleeps quietly until one of us does something evil. But then he wakens, and he has a sharp needle in his hand and with it he stabs and pricks, so that one never has a moment's peace. He keeps on saying softly, 'Now they'll find out what you did! Now they'll find out! Now you're going to be punished.'

"Haven't you found for yourself that this is true, Peter?"

Peter's only reply was a nod of his head, but his expression showed that he had found it to be very true indeed.

"But, it so happened in this case," Grandmamma went on, "that your naughty action brought about a great good for the very person that you meant to harm. Be-

cause the chair was broken, Clara exerted herself, and so has learned to walk at last. And this shows us, Peter, how God can turn the wickedness that one person does into good for the one he meant to injure. But the evil-doer gains nothing, and is left only fear and shame. So remember this whenever you are tempted to do a naughty or spiteful thing, and don't forget the little watchman.

"Now, have you understood me, Peter?"

"Yes," answered Peter, solemnly; the more impressed because he still thought that Mr. Sesemann was a detective.

"Good!" said Grandmamma. "So we aren't going to say anything more about it. Now I should like you to have something that will make you remember the Frankforters with pleasure instead of pain. So tell me if there is anything that you have ever wanted very much to have? Come now—think hard."

Peter raised his head, and fixed upon Grandmamma a pair of round eyes that were blank from astonishment. Here he had been expecting a dreadful punishment, and instead the lady was offering him a present.

"I'm not joking," laughed Mrs. Sesemann. "I mean for you to have something as a token that the visitors from Frankfort are not angry with you. Do you understand me?"

Peter now began to grasp the idea that everything went very much better if one frankly confessed a fault. Therefore, he blurted out:

"And I lost the paper, too!"

Mrs. Sesemann at first did not know what paper he was talking about, then she guessed that he must mean the telegram.

"Ah, yes—well, it's right that you should tell me that, too," she said. "And now have you thought of what you would like to have?"

But Peter needed a very long time to think of anything. There rose before his mind's eye a vision of the yearly fair at Mayenfeld, where his heart had so often yearned for the beautiful red whistles, and the splendid jack-knives with which one could whittle hazel-rods into all sorts of curious objects. But hitherto he had yearned in vain, for never in his life had Peter possessed as much as five pennies that he could call his own.

After several minutes of deep reflection, he raised his head.

"I would like ten pennies," he announced with decision.

Grandmamma laughed.

"Well, certainly that is not too much," she said, and opening her purse she took out a big silver thaler, and on top of it laid twenty pennies.

"Now here, Peter, you have as many times ten pennies as there are weeks in the year. So every Sunday through the whole year you can take ten pennies and spend it as you please."

"All my life?" asked Peter, quite innocently.

At this Mrs. Sesemann laughed so gaily that the two men interrupted their conversation and came over to see what was happening.

"You shall have it, my lad," said Grandmamma. "It shall be put in my will—do you hear, my son? 'To Peter the Goatherd, ten pennies weekly, so long as he shall live!'"

And Mr. Sesemann nodded his head in assent.

Peter gravely fingered the coins that lay in his hand until he had assured himself that they were quite real and he was not dreaming. Then, with deep feeling, he said:

"God be thanked!"

With that, he sprang to his feet, and, as if the bruises of his body had disappeared as completely as had the anguish that had for so long preyed upon his mind, capered away as nimbly as a mountain goat.

That same evening, when the merry supper was over, Clara quietly slipped over to her father, whose face shone with happiness every time his eyes fell upon her, and taking his hand in hers, said with pretty earnestness:

"Papa,—you don't know all that the Grandfather has done for me—so much every single day that I could never even begin to tell you. But I shall never forget as long as I live. And I have been wondering what I could do for him that would give him as much happiness as he has given me."

"That is my dearest wish, too, darling," said Mr. Sesemann. "I have been thinking constantly how we could express to him our gratitude for all that he has done for us."

A moment later he rose, and going over to the Alm-

Uncle who was talking to Grandmamma, drew him to one side.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Sesemann, taking his hand warmly, "there is something that I wish very much to say to you. I am sure that you will understand me when I say that for many years I never knew a moment of genuine happiness; for what joy could all my money and possessions bring me when I saw my beloved child weak and helpless, and realized that I could never buy health and strength for her? But you—with the help of God—have made her well, and have brought to me as to her a new zest for life.

"Now, my friend, tell me what service I can do for you that would in some way give *you* pleasure. Tell me —what can I do?"

The Alm-Uncle looked at him smilingly.

"Mr. Sesemann, believe me when I say that I have my own share of the joy that you feel, and all my care of your child is fully requited by it," he said in his firm, quiet way. "For your generous offer I thank you with all my heart, but for as long as I shall live I have all that I need for myself and for Heidi. Nevertheless, I have one wish, and if I could feel that it would be granted I would never know another care."

"Then only name it, my friend!" urged Mr. Sesemann.

"It is this," said the Alm-Uncle; "I am old, and cannot hope to be many more years in this world. And when I am gone the child will have no one to turn to, for all her relatives are dead except one, who would

readily take advantage of her. If you could promise me that *my* child will never in her life have to go out to seek her bread among strangers, you will have repaid me richly for all that I have done for *yours*."

"Need I say that I *do* promise!" cried Mr. Sesemann. "Already we look upon Heidi as if she belonged to us. Ask my mother and my daughter! And here you have my hand upon the promise. So long as she lives she shall never want a home. And let me add another thing. We have learned by experience that Heidi was not made to live happily among strangers; but she has made warm friends, and one of them lives in Frankfort now. It is the doctor who visited you this autumn, and who, following your advice, has made up his mind to come and live here near you and Heidi. For he found that he could be happy here as he could be nowhere else. So you see that there will be two guardians for your child, who will care for her good always!"

"And may it be God's wish," said Mrs. Sesemann, as she took the Alm-Uncle's hand and pressed it tenderly. Then drawing Heidi to her, she asked:

"And you, my little Heidi—have you a wish, too?"

"Yes, Grandmamma. One," answered Heidi, eagerly. "I should like to have my bed from Frankfort with the three high pillows and the thick, warm covers. For then Granny will be able to breathe more easily, and will always be warm. Now she has to wear her shawl in bed, because, otherwise, she would be so dreadfully cold."

"Ah, my Heidi,—it is good that you reminded me!" said Grandmamma. "When God blesses us it is right to

think of others who have hardships to bear. We will telegraph to Frankfort at once, and this very day Miss Rottenmeier will have the bed packed and sent so that it will be here the day after to-morrow. And may Granny sleep soundly upon it!"

Overjoyed, Heidi wanted to rush off to Granny at once to break the splendid news, but her grandfather checked her.

"No, no, Heidi—when one has visitors, one can't run off and leave them."

But Mrs. Sesemann interposed.

"Why cannot we all go to see Granny?" said she. "They are bringing my horse for me now, and it is time for us to go back to Dorfli if we want to get that telegram off to-day."

But Mr. Sesemann asked her to wait until he had told *his* plans, which he had not yet had time to explain. He then went on to say that he had arranged to take a little trip through Switzerland with his mother, and that now he longed to take Clara with them so that they could enjoy the exquisite scenery together while the weather was still so warm and sunny. He would spend that night in Dorfli, and come the next morning to get Clara. Then they would start at once for Ragatz, and from there continue the trip.

Clara was very sorry to think of leaving the Alm, but at the same time she could not but take pleasure in the prospect of a delightful journey with her beloved father and Grandmamma.

At length Mrs. Sesemann rose, and taking Heidi's

hand, said that they would now go and pay their visit to Granny. But when they had gone a little way from the hut, she stopped short.

"What in the world are they doing with Clara?" she cried in amazement. For the Alm-Uncle had taken his little patient's arm, and the two were following them with firm steps, while the happy father walked beside them.

Brigida was hanging Peter's shirt up on the clothesline to dry in the sun as the little procession approached; but seeing all the strangers, she hurried into the cottage.

"They're all going down the mountain, Mother!" she cried. "And the Uncle's with them, helping the sick child."

"Ah, Brigida,—are they taking Heidi with them?" wailed the poor old woman. "Oh, if only I could feel her little hand and hear her voice!"

At that very moment the door flew open, and in ran Heidi.

"Granny! Granny!" she cried, hugging the old woman joyously. "My bed is coming from Frankfort --with the three big pillows and all the lovely warm covers! And Grandmamma says that it will be here in two days!"

The old woman smiled—but her face was sad.

"What a good kind lady she is! I suppose I should be glad, Heidi, that she is taking you with her, but—I think it will kill me."

"What is that?" said a friendly voice. "What is it

that the good Granny is saying?" and the blind woman felt her hand taken in a warm grasp. "No, indeed," went on Mrs. Sesemann, "Heidi will stay with you and give you happiness. It is true that we too love to see the child, but it is we who will come to her. And every year we shall come to the Alm, for it was here that a great blessing came to us for which we will thank God all our days!"

A great light seemed to break over the blind woman's face, and with the tears of joy running down her cheeks she pressed Mrs. Sesemann's hand in speechless gratitude.

"And now, Granny, you will get quite well," cried Heidi. "Aren't you glad about the bed?"

"Ah, Heidi—indeed I am—and for all the blessings that God has sent me. There is nothing that so strengthens one's faith in a loving Father in Heaven as when one finds good people whose hearts are kind and merciful to a poor useless old woman like me."

"My dear Granny," said Mrs. Sesemann, "before our Heavenly Father we are all poor and helpless, and we all have need of *His* mercy and kindness. And now we must say good-bye. But we shall all meet again, next summer, when Clara comes back to the Alm."

When they had left the cottage, Mr. Sesemann and his mother continued their way to Dorfli, and the Alm-Uncle, carrying Clara in his arms, while Heidi danced along beside him, returned to the hut.

When Mr. Sesemann had come with the men from

Dorfli the next morning, Clara said good-bye with tears. But Heidi comforted her.

"Summer will be here again before you know it," she said, embracing her friend. "And you will come back again, and it will be more beautiful than ever. Then you will be able to walk and run, and we can go to the pastures every day and pick wild flowers together."

Clara wiped away her tears.

"Tell Peter that I send a 'good-bye' to him, too," she said. "And to all the goats, especially to Little Swan. Oh, I wish I could give *her* a present, for she helped so much to make me well."

"You can!" laughed Heidi. "Send her a little salt, for you know how she likes to lick it from Grandfather's hand when she comes home in the evening."

"Then I will send her a hundred pounds of salt from Frankfort!" cried Clara, delighted with this suggestion.

And now at last it was time for her to go. So she mounted the white horse, and instead of being carried down the mountain in the sedan chair, rode down, sitting erect in the saddle like a good horsewoman. And Heidi, stationing herself on the edge of the cliff, stood waving her hand, until the last glimpse of her friends had vanished.

. . . . . .

The bed had come from Frankfort, and now Granny slept so comfortably every night that soon she did begin to grow stronger and better in every way. Mrs. Sesemann, anticipating the long bitter winter on the Alm,

had sent all kinds of warm clothing to the goatherd's hut so that the little family had no cause to fear the freezing weather.

In Dorfli, some very energetic building was already under way, for the doctor had come to live there, and had bought the old house in which Heidi and her grandfather had lived the winter before. Thus, once more, it became a handsome dwelling. One part of it the doctor had rebuilt and furnished for himself, and in the other Heidi and her grandfather had what the old man called their "winter quarters." And in the back was a warm, well-built stable for the goats.

The doctor and the Alm-Uncle grew to be better friends than ever, and now they often spoke together of Heidi, for now it was as if she belonged to both of them.

"My dear friend," said the doctor, one day, as they stood watching the workman repair the wall that enclosed the ancient manor house, "I share all my happiness in the child with you—but I must likewise share with you all the duties of a parent. As I look forward to having her with me when I too grow old, so shall she have all her rights as if she were my own child. When I am gone she shall inherit all that I have."

The Alm-Uncle pressed his hand without speaking, but the doctor could see in the old man's eyes the joy and peace that his words had given him.

In the goatherd's cottage sat Heidi and Peter and Granny and Brigida. It seemed to Heidi that she would *never* be able to tell Granny all the wonderful things

that had happened *that* summer, and she talked so quickly that she was almost breathless. But Brigida's face was shining, for now, with Heidi's help, she had at last come to a clear understanding of the history of Peter's weekly allowance.

"Heidi," said Granny at last, "read me now a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. For it seems as if I can never thank the good God enough for all the happiness He has sent us!"

THE END